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SOME TECHNIQUES FOR CHORAL SUCCESS

by

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Toledo 6, Ohio

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Preface

Good choral organizations are possible in any American community. No public school situation is so unique that it is impossible to produce an acceptable choir. The writer has observed musicianly performances by groups who rehearse under all kinds of adverse circumstances. Certainly, it is true that material, a sympathetic administrative environment, and physical equipment are conducive toward producing the finished product. But very often an excellent choir is developed without a full realization of the above three factors. But in any given situation there are reasons for success. Should we not stop and ask, "Why success or failure?" A closer analysis of the problem strikingly reveals that there are common choral transgressions which are but remotely related to material, administrative patronage, and physical equipment.

Wherever one goes, a frequently asked question is, "What is it that makes a good choral organization?" Do good singing groups attain choral precision because of some special or even secret technique? Why special techniques when further analysis reveals that that group and others of real quality have been built upon a religious observance of those fundamentals which are known to every student of choral conducting and singing? We hasten to add however, that knowledge *about* choral conducting and singing is totally different than *knowing* what to transmit through conducting and singing. Having had the opportunity of adjudicating many hundreds of choruses in many states, the writer has made an intensive study as to why some directors succeed and others seem to fail or merely mark time.

My readers will probably be surprised to find that they have observed many of the choral transgressions about to be discussed. They may even be surprised to find that they too know them as existing requirements of good singing. The writer unhesitatingly desires to state that if the following features of good choral singing were meticulously sought after, every choral group would make notable progress toward the goal sought, namely a musicianly performance. Diligent disciplined pursuit after these factors will richly reward every choral director and guarantee his success in producing excellent singing results.

Choral conducting is not a question of getting groups to start and stop as commanded. Problems related to choral work are due in great measure to the lack of "the how." Successful directors obtain success because they have been students of singing—they are technicians as well as musicians. One without the other spells failure. No one ever obtained beautiful choral results by just "directing people in song." Choral people must be masters of knowing "the how" to secure beautiful singing tone from groups of singers. Beautiful results will not just happen.

This book is an outgrowth of more than a quarter of a century of choral experiences. The author has set forth in the following treatise what he deems to be some of the more pertinent considerations in securing good choral results.

A cursory glance at the table of contents will reveal the different nature of this book. It is not designed to be an all comprehensive treatment. The first section of the book is devoted to the physical aspects of producing good singing. The remaining discussion is designed to assist the choral director in obtaining a musical performance.

Much indebtedness is due many persons who by their friendly counsel and inspiration have aided the author. As the list is legion it would be wrong to single out some for passing mention. However, special mention is made regarding the drawings which were given the professional touch of Mr. D. G. Durborow. With consummate equity to all, the author desires to express his appreciation to all those music educators of the New York State School Music Association. This group during the past ten years has contributed much to the writer's professional development. The author as reviewer of choral literature for their *School Music News* and as a vocal adjudicator has had the benefit of the Association's friendship and professional stimulus.

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Toledo, Ohio
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Chapter I

TECHNIQUES FOR CHORAL SUCCESS

Introduction

IT is absolutely amazing how musically educational a choir rehearsal can be. It is not enough to meet a group of singers, teach them their respective parts, get them to start and stop together, dress them up prettily, produce a coordinated unit, and then feel that if the performance receives public approval, music education has been at work.

A choir rehearsal can be a vital educational experience. It is possible to teach those attending something about the art of singing. During the period of three or four years that a singer is a member of a secondary or collegiate chorus he could learn many fundamental vocal techniques. Among those which may be effectively taught during rehearsals are conducting, breathing, tone production, voice classification, diction, and those nicer amenities which characterize intelligent singing and public performance.

Greater interest will be maintained if the director will conduct a dynamic, action-crammed rehearsal. No time should be consumed without being accompanied by an active learning process. Singers must be made conscious of the time investment which they are making in attending rehearsals. Likewise, the conductor must be cognizant of his educational obligations during the time he is utilizing the choristers. If both the singer and the conductor are conscious of their time investment, greater success will attend the rehearsals. If singers feel that they are learning something about music as well as having a soul-refreshing experience, they will be challenged by those demands that make for great accomplishment. A rehearsal period packed with musical learning is a challenge to purposeful achievement. Every meeting of the choir should be a learning experience. Many choristers are just singers who open their mouths; few are taught how to sing. At succeeding rehearsals much of the same negative learning continues. People must be taught how to sing; they must know how to produce results and those results must be vigilantly sought after and be satisfying to all.

CHAPTER II

SINGING AND SPEAKING

THESE are the most common activities employed by man during his waking hours. The amazing thing is that so little is done by educated man to improve the manner of doing either. From the time that the child is born there is almost no direction as to how he should produce vowels and consonants. Whoever heard of a parent giving the child help with his diction?

Not alone is this common experience for the child during the first six years of his life, but as he enters upon his formal educative processes, the mechanics of correctly writing a sentence are stressed, but again his training is almost entirely devoid of correct speech habits. It is obvious that ignorance of the physiological basis for speech and euphony of its production is one of the most remiss acts of modern education. Little wonder that among speakers and singers alike the art of orthoepy is murdered beyond recognition. This is true of the majority of those who profess to be good signers. There is almost no correlation between oratory and excellence of orthoepy in America. Certainly the time has arrived when greater emphasis should be given the study of diction by both the American speaker and singer.

Intensive Study Needed. To the uninitiated let it suffice to say that good diction requires as intensive a study as the art of singing itself. If the reader is disinclined to accept such a thesis, then it would seem justifiable to ask this question, "Why have singers failed so miserably to become artistic purveyors of their mother tongue?" Artistic finesse is only possible with impeccable diction!

Because we have had slothful diction is no justification for continuance of the practice or to admit that nothing can be done about it. As no millenium can be created over night and as our educational method and program in America provide but spotty recognition of the need for better speech efforts, it is of necessity the choral director's responsibility to impart a facile dictional knowledge during rehearsals.

As the choral director cannot supply all of the refinements of tonal production and dictional finesse during a rehearsal, it is obvious he will have to limit himself to easily understood and effective suggestions which will produce results.

Tone and Diction. These two are impossible one without the other. We have the vowels within the grasp of metaphysical conceptions; it remains for us to develop techniques and practices which will help us project them. The life blood of the whole process is enmeshed within the effectiveness of tone on the conveyor-belt of vowels and consonants.

Diction, Pronunciation, and Articulation. These three words are commonly confused. Diction is generally considered to be the manner of delivering words with correct pronunciation and distinct clarity (articulation) of consonantal forms. The word enunciation is sometimes used to connote articulation of consonants. Diction is a general term covering all phases of the mechanics of delivering a word. The other terms consider the specific phases of diction. The singer's big job is to get the proper balance and eloquence between pronunciation and articulation, of the vowel and consonant. Tone and diction are coexistent—one with the other; there is no pure vowel language.

Once tone is properly conceived and projected, the singers are confronted with diction, the medium which clothes it with intelligibility. Granted that the ideal singing tone is the objective, once it is attained, the question of its delivery posits a real problem to the choral director. Realistically speaking, of what good use is beautiful tone without the words? Undoubtedly the most common error among all categories of singers is their inability to make their tongue intelligibly beautiful to their audiences. The word, the verse, and the metre of that verse contain the germ of beautiful phrase line and rhythmic beauty. This phase of choral conducting is undoubtedly one of the most exacting aspects of extracting good choral results. The ability to deliver a word with exquisite metrical rhythm is an objective that is rarely achieved by choristers.

Pronunciation must be vibrant and expressive; it must aid in conveying thought. Pronunciation if properly delivered will aid in transmitting intelligently the message of a song to its hearers. *If pronunciation considers the exactness in our choice of delivering the correct emphasis upon the syllabic structure of words, then enunciation demands the clarity and fidelity with which the exterior forms of the word structure are produced for the hearer.*

The importance of diction in singing is of such great moment that it is as vital as correct tone production. Not alone is diction important to the intelligibility of the message, but the success with which its execution is mastered in large part determines the beauty of legato tone line. Diction is basic to all good vocal instruction. The choral director who thoroughly understands the potential effectiveness of good diction and knows how to teach it has achieved a powerful ally for good tone production. Vocalizes are important but more important are the words. For they and they alone contain the germ of good tone. Many vocal teachers are tone conscious but fail to understand the importance of the vowel, consonant, and dipthong in the word that eventually becomes the sole medium for conveying the message.

Voiced and Non-Voiced Consonants. Some choral conductors give attention to the important part the vowel plays in singing. But let me set forth this challenge: "Whoever hears about the voiced consonants as a medium for phrase-line continuity?" The voiced consonant is partially singable. It is soft in its effectiveness, therefore being nicely suited for effecting a bridge between word beginnings and endings.

Among the consonants the voiceless or non-voiced group includes k, p, t, f, ch, and s. The voiced group has b, d, v, z, l, g, j, w, r, m, and n (ng) for emphasis. The latter group can contribute much to the legato of a vocal line of tone. Naturally such smoothness of tonal delivery would materially aid intonation. Barely do you observe choral directors emphasizing the importance of the consonant in the delivery of the phrase line, tone quality, dramatic intensity, as components of a total musical effect. So many directors have had just a few voice lessons during which time the vowels and tone production were stressed at the expense of intelligent diction. The consonants are responsible for the train of intelligent dictional sounds connecting words into phrases and thereby constructing thought groups for listening. Sing the voiced consonants but be sure to use the non-voiced group properly. After each sustained vowel in a word, the non-voiced consonant, which finishes or gives intelligibility to the words, must be delivered with a dramatic hesitancy for its completion before going to the next syllable or word. If a word possesses a

consonantal ending, it must be used and not thrown into the discard and it *must not* be confused with a sequential consonant or vowel form.

Another phase of this problem is the emphasis needed to be given to the pronunciation of the polysyllabic words. Rarely do we hear correct pronunciation based upon true musical understanding. Truly, choral singing can be an intense musical and intellectual study; often it is just a get-together sing with but a negligible amount of time devoted to a study of voice, musical form, and the dramatic purpose of music and text.

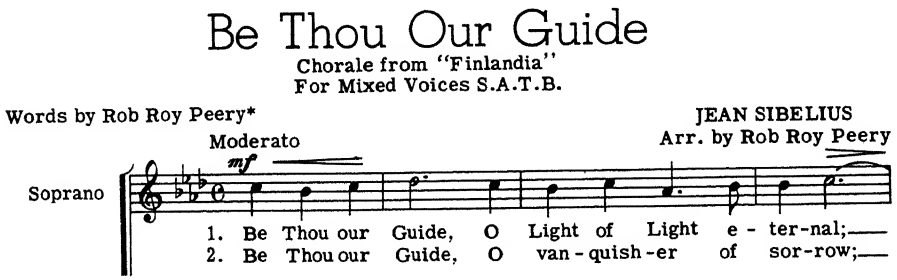
The Articulators. The lips and the tongue are a most important factor in the singing process. It is they which are responsible for making language a communicative art. It would be difficult to conceive an interchange of ideas without these two organs.

The articulators need intensive guidance in order to make diction, pronunciation, and articulation effective in aiding speech. Absolute muscular relaxation is involved in reference to the education of their functions for the singing act. Of the tongue we have spoken elsewhere. Regarding the lips—they must be completely relaxed and obedient to the commands of the mind.

The lips should not be drawn tightly in front of the teeth. They should be loose and readily serviceable to the needs of consonantal projection. Wherever they aid, and certainly they do, they should also be taught how to assist in facilitating the projection and formation of vowels. Because of their direct relationship to the mouth and the anterior coverage of part of the mask of the face they are involved in resonance; as a chamber of resonance they are important, especially in the act of humming and in effecting certain tonal qualities of the middle and upper portions of the singer's range.

The Jaw is in the Way. One impediment to good vowel and consonant delivery is the constant effort on the part of some singers to open and close the lower jaw every time vowels and consonants are ejaculated. Many people miss the opportunity for having a good legato (connected) word delivery because too much space is interspered between words.

In the phrase "Be Thou our Guide, O Light of Light eternal..."



many singers close the mouth unnecessarily with each vowel or consonant attack or release. Pictorially the delivery is generally:

Generally:

Durationally

(Shaded area indicates loss of tonal volume)

Should Be:

Durationally

In the second illustration the shaded area indicates the tonal volume. It was deemed better to use the shaded area than blank spaces (as in the first illustration) for illustrative purposes. The small blank space between notes indicates momentary loss of tone in the initial delivery of each new word. It can be seen that the tone will be more sustained, and with less diminishing tones, intonation will improve, and with the resulting better legato delivery, a more musicianly result will ensue. The taper at the beginning of each delivery indicates tone wasted before the vowel is given sufficient durational sustainment (see first illustration). The long final taper indicates the degree to which the tone is vitiated due to an unnecessarily closed mouth before the consummation of a note's duration.

Vowel Forms Are Related To Relaxed-Lowered Tongue Position. Positively associated with the relaxed tongue position is the mental sensing of vowel forms. Vowel forms are not made in the mouth; they are made in the brain—the mind is where they are conceived. It would seem definitive to say that with the possible exception of physical deformity or previous injury to the resonating chambers of the mouth, it would be impossible to improve upon the form assumed by throat processes under the direction of the mind. In voice training there has been too much of the physical to the mind action instead of the mind directing the physical organs of the body.

Ask the vocal student to open the mouth, relax the jaw, and articulate the vowel "ah". What is actually being done is, the singer is hearing himself articulate instead of singing the vowels. Say five or six "ahs" and then employ the others such as "ooh," "eh," "e," "oh," etc. If they are employed in succession, it will be found the tongue and lower jaw automatically take on positions which are consonant with the true form of each vowel.

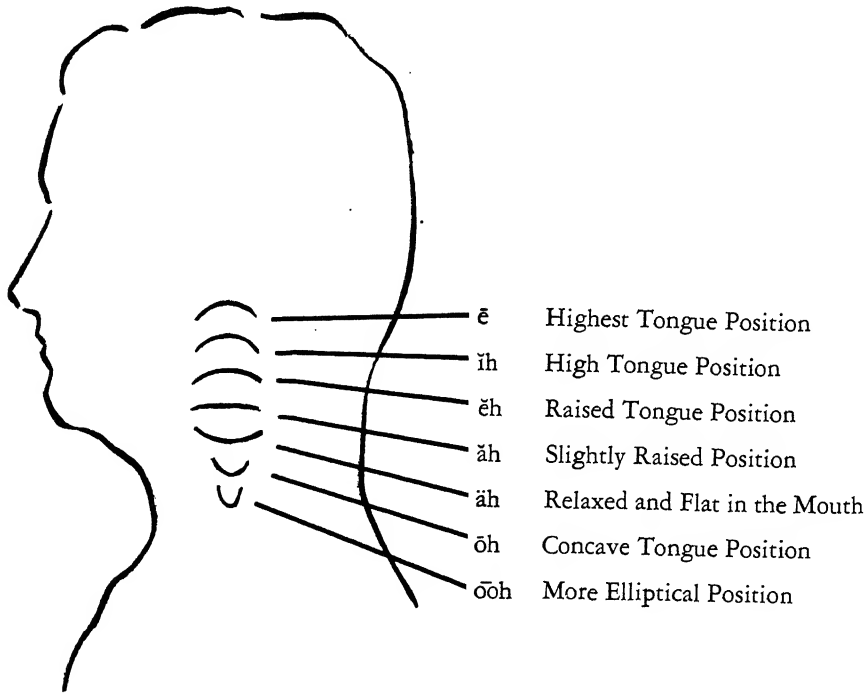
The critical test in the whole exercise is the following: Articulate a pure "oh". Write a large "oh" on a sheet of paper and hold it in front of the singer in order that there is some certainty that he is concentrating upon the true form; after all the *mental concept is the only guarantee of success.* While articulating the vowel "oh" ask the singer to go to the production of a pure "e" but insist that he does not move the lips or tongue positions. It will be found that such an act is impossible. Each vowel position is diametrically opposed to the other. Not alone does this indicate that there is a definite form directed by the mind but also a definite position for each vowel or modification thereof. Reverse the procedure and a like result will occur.

Now if the jaw and tongue are in a relaxed and resilient condition, it is obvious that the mental sensing of the vowel form becomes part and parcel of

It is amazing the amount of improvement that can be made in the delivery of words by using the simple technique just suggested. The more mental control brought to bear upon the sensing of articulated vowels, the less effective will be the body's effectiveness in interfering with resilient tonal delivery and dynamic dictional accuracy. Thinking in terms of purity is our basic objective. It must be added that the vowels "ah" and "oh" are more conducive to our objective and the bright vowels should be avoided until the singer has a good understanding of the rudiments involved in singing pure "ah's" and "oh's". Practice and particularly guidance are important to success in creating desirable responses. Thousands of voice students vocalize and practice the singing of exercises; thousands of others rarely think constructively toward tonal idealism during their exercises, because they do not think clearly of what they are sensing.

In all the exercises not only should the ideal mental concept be achieved, but the singer must learn to produce a properly conceived tone throughout the dynamic range, through the gamut of gradations from piano to fortissimo. It is one achievement to produce a given pitch with relative tonal idealism, but it is still another achievement to produce the ideal tone with fidelity irrespective of mental energization. Early practice should mean the singing of long tones; the short tone is futile. After the mind which is the directional agent, the ear is the student's sole guide to success. He must hold the tone long enough to hear it with studied purposefulness.

Vowel and Position. If the singer will be taught to learn how to sense vowels and detect the action such sensation has upon the tongue position, he will also find that there is an approximate anterior to posterior relationship as indicated in the following diagram.



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In other words most singers open their mouths and say words without reference to the relative position between thought and position of tongue in singing pure or modified vowel forms. If in producing the pure *E* the singer does not maintain a mental focus and resonance commensurate with the vowel under consideration the result will be vitiated; if the singer sings *OO* as in *hoot* and does not get an elliptical or *extreme oval* form, the brilliance of the *OO's* resonance will be lost in proportion to the modification of the vowel. This same idea could be applied to all other vowels and their borrowed forms; any impairment means resonance vitiation and loss of tonal beauty.

It is obvious that the sustainment of any vowel requires a physio-mental reinforcement for its effective sustainment. Eventually, though many fail to recognize it, the mind does the singing. We need more mental singers whose bodies are responsive to better conceptions.

Bright and Dark Vowls. The great beauty of the English language is the great variety of vowels and their compounded forms available for use. This same asset makes implicit the demand that each be uttered with fidelity. Among the classifications found, the following are quite serviceable:

Bright Vowels		*Dark Vowels*	
ā	as in lay	ōh	as in omen, home, go, Po.
ēē	as in feed, be or he	ōō	as in boot, or hoot
ĕh	as in head, or bed	ô	as in saw, or paw
ăh	as in hat or rat	ŏ	as in tot, or pot, shot
ĭh	as in him, hid, hit, or rid	ū	as in mute
äh	as in father	ŏŏ	as in hood, pull, foot
ī	as in tie, lie, or my		

Qualified Forms

ŭh as in hut or shut

Diphthongal (Double Vowels)

oi as in boil, oil, or toil

Vowels Have Resonance. Purity of the vowel and its mental form are a major consideration. It we admit that resonance is tone and vowels are inextricably a part of tonal purveyors, then it would be reasonable to assume that vowels have resonance. Then, too, it would be more objective to indicate that by retaining vowel purity, tonal bore, and intonational accuracy, resonance is being intensified and enhanced. The voice is a unitary function; therefore it is impossible to speak of vocal functions as entities unrelated to any other physiological or metaphysical factor.

Now if the vowel resonance of which we have spoken is interfered with by impure vowel conception, then it follows that the purity of resonance will be vitiated and the beauty of the voice will be affected. The striking beauty of some voices is the manifold iridescence of tonal color which issues from the throat due to variety of a tone's—RESONANCE. If our tonal colors—RESONANCES—are impure, do we have a distinct variation of tonal color? It is the purity and variety of tonal hues that count and not their sameness. By working for vowel purity and fidelity of variation the singer produces interesting tonal color. This art of singing is not just the opening the mouth and letting something come out! The argument may be presented that we have good singers without

taking cognizance of these considerations—Yes! They might be even better if only the mind could reinforce the emotions in tonal production!

Legato Vowelization. There is no superior diction without resonance or breathing. There is no *bel canto* singing style without effectual breathing. The art of legato phraseline is only conceived through the knowledge of diction and its use. Metre in verse is a further consideration.

Legato and the Vowel. This is one of the most important considerations of solo and choral singing. To it may be accredited much of the success or failure which have accompanied the vocal work produced by voice teachers and choral directors alike. A good understanding of what to do with the vowel and consonant during the singing process is of major consideration; yet few people see clearly its musical implications.

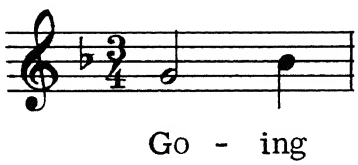
Just what is inherent in an understanding of the relationship between the legato and the vowel that assures success in choral singing? A refined legato which assures close connection of word to word, and syllable to syllable is bound to improve phrasing finesse. Many of our singers just ejaculate tone without much reference to vowel sustainment. By continuing the vowel sound as long as possible there is no question but that intonation will be immeasurably improved. Great sustainment of the vowel form will insure better tonal projection—the overtones and resonance will not be interfered with to the degree that they would be when poor vowelization is projected. Then too, the emotional power inherent in dynamic vowelization will become increasingly apparent as the singer is taught how to capitalize upon the dramatic force of a word's structural beauty.

Of correct primary and secondary accent there is little need for further elaboration. Any recognized dictionary can furnish this information. The spoken and sung word have many things in common. There is, however, the musical consideration of pitch which is different. One of the most common errors is the following:

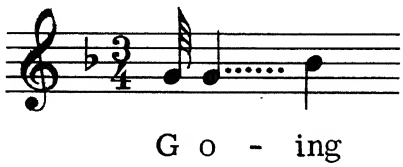
Dual Syllable-Pitch Conception. In the singing of a given vowel, invariably the singer sustains it for one pitch of given length and carries it over to the sequential pitch without justification.

Illustration:

(a) Practically



(b) Actually



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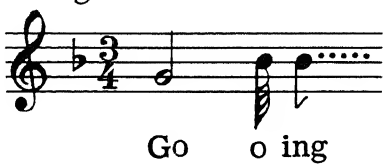
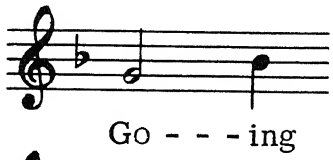


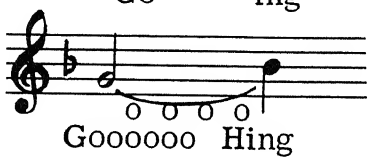
(Note valuations are for illustrative purposes)

In sustaining the vowel *O* in the first syllable the singer must sing it for as great a proportion of the two beats as is not consumed in producing the initial consonant G; all remaining time is for the vowel *O*. The duality of pitch conception occurs when the singer carries the vowel *O* onto the sequential pitch of B-flat which is specifically assigned to the syllable *ing*. In the syllable *ing*, the vowel *O* must not be present. The falsity of intonation occurs in producing the elision between the two pitches (c). It is palpable that if more than one singer produces such a *shovelling tonal act* myriads of pitch inconsistencies will occur. In the first place no two people will produce the same pitch at the same time. It would be possible in a group of 100 singers to have fifty, sixty, or more people vitiating the amount of vowel *O* that is being displaced improperly on the pitch B-flat. The ideal concept is:

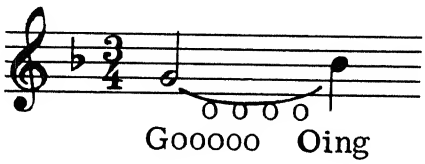
Illustration:



This should be approximated



And not this

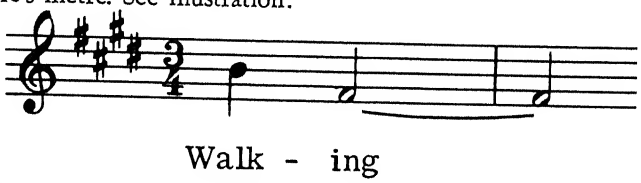


OR EVEN THIS

Now it is perfectly obvious that if the singer in transferring the *O* in *Go* to the B-flat pitch he is committing something which is *not* intended musically. Very often such inaccuracy encourages giving a primary accent to the secondary one. It is not *go-ING,* but rather *GO-ing.* The composer in selecting the triple metre and word has recognized this fact.

Accentuation and Writing. One of the many common errors in writing rhythm (notation) is to give it a metre which is contrary to that of the word's pronunciation. Such an accent is ruinous to the music's inherent structural accent and the literature's metre. See illustration:

Illustration:



etc.

It is the singer's obligation to pronounce such flagrant metre inconsistencies correctly and take great care in giving the word good pronunciation; this is in keeping with the type of music. Many times a composer has done a great injustice to text through poor scoring and the singer or choral director is sometimes thoroughly justified in making a notational correction.

The Lips and the Vowel. The question of the lips and their position when singing vowels is bothersome to some singers; the assumed position as demonstrated by many other vocalists is troublesome and for effective tonal delivery quite ridiculous.

In having dealt with thousands of vocalists it has been more than an infrequent observation to note that people in both speech and singing shape their lips in an unnatural manner. Reasons for this are manifold. It may be due to a nervous or muscular condition, undoubtedly a question of self-control. The nervous muscular twitch which is apparent is often due to a self-consciousness which is reflected by such muscular mannerisms.

The important thing is for the singer to allow the mind to become operative in all singing processes; this is especially true of throat and lip executions. In sensing the vowel form as indicated previously, the singer must strive for complete relaxation of the throat—a feeling of a spread hyoid bone with plenty of undertongue and noticeable under-jaw freedom should go a long way toward relieving tension in the musculature in the vicinity of the lips. If the singer *thinks* suppleness in the forward mouth regions the mind action should greatly help in the problem discussed; this involves practice, and it is unbelievably beneficial.

If the vowels are correctly sensed and the singer allows his mouth and associated musculature to be responsive to its command, it will be found that in sensing the vowels whether they be a, e, i, o, or u, that the lips, jaw, hyoid bone, and tongue assume positions which are complementary to the demands of the vowel which is being mentally conceived. The caution at this point is that the singer must not make the lip formation. No vocal instructor has the combination which will make for correct lip position. By forcing a made lip position there are some forms which will make for strident tone and inflexible diction.

Mental Energization of Vowel Forms. It has been already stressed that the mind should be held responsible for the vowel form. If the singer will emphasize energization of vowel forms in a downward through the body attitude instead of forcing them through a forward mouth or throat position, it will be found that the lips will assume a more vigorous positional form complementary to the vowel used. Illustration: Sing the vowel *O* with utmost relaxation. With the mental approach suggested above it will be found that the lips will assume a natural relaxed position. Now, sing a vigorous *O* energizing its form downward. It will be noticed that as the energization increases, the intensity of the *O* form increases. This is as it should be. As the intensity of any mental concept increases, the lip musculature and all other coordinated areas must be responsive. What has been described relative to the vowel *O* is just as applicable to all other primary and modified vowel forms. (See Downward and Upward Action in Chapter 3.)

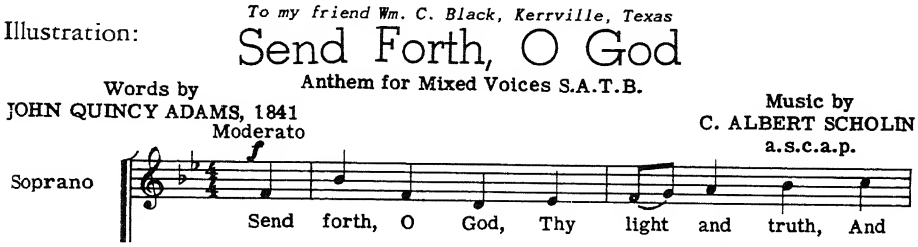
Beginning The Study of Vowels. Most people who begin vocal study are confronted with the problem of what vowel to use. With women's voices it is common to find the vocalizes very shallow and mouthy in quality. Most women's voices need the rounder or darker vowel forms. The vowel AH and the vowel OH are generally safe to use; however, the writer has found that the others can upon occasion be used. It is impossible to make a definite rule as to which vowel to use. Because tones are frequently shallow the two mentioned above are worthwhile. The important consideration is to listen to the singer produce all the

vowel forms and then work from the best to the poorest. By using the better vowel of which the individual is capable, the pupil has a model after which he can pattern his hearing and concomitantly his understanding of what to do.

No student can make progress unless he is able to hear his own voice properly. As soon as he can understand and hear poor and good tone qualities, then and then only does progress become noticeable. How long a student should work on the one or two vowels suggested is a matter of much conjecture. It is recommended that just as soon as he is able to produce other reasonably satisfactory vowel forms he should do so. They may be only effectively good within a range of four or five tones, yet it is recommended that they be used. The important thing is to set up hearing models of the right type of tonal production as soon as possible. Every effort should be bent toward making all vowel sounds conform to the *fundamental goodness*—that being the acceptable tone quality which has been effectively worked out on one or more vowels.

Pronunciation—Metre. Choral singing requires more than the accurate or relatively correct mental concept of vowel conception. Choral directors for the most part have had some voice lessons, but therein may repose the problem. A superlative concert artist must go further than think of the vowel. He must pronounce the beginnings and the endings of words. This is entirely implemented by the consonant. Some words begin or end with vowels but in all words the two components of word structure must be faithfully and clearly delivered. It is pronunciation that is so basic to the correct delivery of a given text's metre. If the word is iambic or trochaic it must receive correct treatment. It is at this point that both the rhythmic and metrical pulse of the music and text is so often ruined. See excerpt from the anthem, "Send Forth, O God." It illustrates iambic metre.

Illustration:



The Hissing SS'S. The ever present hissing the final *S* and the comparable sound in words begining with *S* have evoked much trouble for choral directors. Their effects are particularly annoying where many singers are involved. In the case of the soloist it is possible to achieve a neat musical effect by making a dramatic hesitancy after the delivery of the *S* before delivering the second syllable in the word kisses. Properly pronounced it would be kiss—ez instead of kissez —the dramatic hesitancy and separation make for dictional accuracy.

In an ensemble's usage of the *S* it is suggested that the director delete pronunciation of the final *S* by many of the choristers. Thus, if it is a choir singing eight-part music and the organization is by quartets or octets, then it would be possible to have certain groups employ the *S* and the others could delete them. The success of this technique depends upon the correct distribution of who is and who is not going to sing the consonant in question.

Consonants Are Important Too! It is common practice among voice teachers, and rightly so, to begin vocal study with vowels. Vocalizes are the order of the day. Various vocal methods are employed, and they too must stress usage of the vowel and tonal development; vowels can be sung, but the consonants are mere articulants in the process of making words intelligible. Herein lies the great challenge to the singer. Whereas the vowels are rather limited in number, it is patent that the greater number of consonants increases the difficulty of the problem of articulation. As Americans concentrate on grammar instruction in our elementary and secondary schools and rarely emphasize good speech, good articulation and pronunciation are not common. It thus becomes the job of the vocal instructor to be, in addition to his many other qualifications, a speech teacher.

Consonantal Singing. This dictional habit is among the worst kind. No dictional habit could have a more detrimental effect upon vocal performance. Unquestionably a major reason for this and other habits of like ilk, is the fact that American boys and girls are not taught how to speak their native tongue; they stumble into the activity known as speech. Improper speech habits are permitted from their early speech beginnings, from the time they make their first guttural gurgling sounds.

This discussion is dependent upon the thesis that there are two basic consonant groups, namely, the voiced and the non-voiced groups. In an acceptable delivery of words these two must be properly understood in order to legatoize phrasing. (See section dealing with these, page 11.)

In the sustainment of words it is tonally devastating to attempt to produce good diction without a proper understanding of consonants and their relationship to singing. Take the consonants that follow and study the illustrations:
A. Explosives. B, P, T, D, G, K are produced by an ejaculated force beginning with a closed forward resonance, opening as the mouth emits them.

Illustration:

B	as in Bee
P	as in Put
T	as in Tin
D	as in Dud
G	as in Gun
K	as in Kind

In all of the explosive consonants listed it is obvious that it is impossible to produce words of any syllable description without following the vowel suffix. Take the following illustrations—in these the suffixed vowel is required.

B	as in Bub
P	as in Puppy
T	as in Tint
D	as in Dud
G	as in Gut
K	as in Kink

In all these the ûh is always present in the final delivery of the consonant in question. The point to this whole discussion is that the singer or director must require his singers to produce the consonant as rapidly as possible in order that the articulatory consonantal processes do not submerge the prefixed or suffixed vowel after any of the above explosives. What is stated here regarding these is likewise true of all other consonants. We must sing tone (vowel) and not attempt to sustain the unsingable—the consonant.

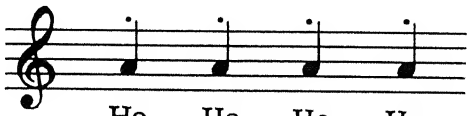
K and G. (Explosives). These two hard explosives are worthless as to their vocableness. They are ruinous to the delivery of vocal sounds. They are tone stoppers. They should be affixed or suffixed to words with distinctness, yet with a lightning like delivery so as not to interfere with the vocal sound—the vowel.

Illustration:

Common equals	K	ŏ	ŭh
Go far equals	G	ō	äh
Keep on equals	K	ē	ŏn
Glucose equals	G	ōō	ō

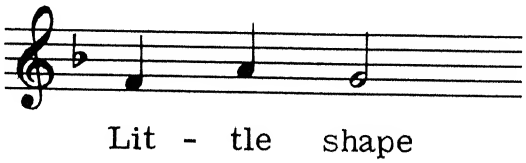
H. This is an explosive aspirate. It is a very breathy consonant and is conducive to drawing unnecessary amounts of breath from the individual thereby interfering with sustained phrase delivery. A good practice exercise for cutting down the breathiness of tonal delivery is to sing at a comfortable pitch level a staccato H H H H. It should be crisp; watch for breath preceding its delivery.

Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha.



B. Sibilants. S, Z, Sh, Zh, Tsh, Dzh, are called sibilants. The consonantal sounds are made with a nearly closed mouth position. They are to be observed by the choral direction for either over or under emphasis. If over stressed, they ruin listening pleasure by becoming annoying. They must not be eliminated for they ruin the diction; without diction the text and meaning are gone. The *S* is breathy whereas the *Z* is voiced.

Illustration:



Wrong

The *Sh* should last only long enough to produce the prefix *Sh*, then the singer should stay on the singable vowel *A* that follows:

The word *Shape* lasting for two beats should be delivered in the following manner:

Sh	equals 1/64 of a beat	All values are approximations
A	equals 1 and 62/64 of a beat	
P	equals 1/64 of a beat	

We must never lose sight of the fact that vowels are to be sustained and sung, whereas the consonants are not.

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C. Diphthongs. Because the diphthong is made up of vowels and two of them at that, the delivery is very vocable. Two vowels sound as one sound or syllable. In voicing the following, conscientious care must be given to a proper stressing of the first vowel. The second vowel receives a secondary attention which is not prolonged.

Illustration:

a	as in late
i	as in mine
o	as in know
oi	as in boil
ou	as in out
ar	as in dare
er	as in deer
oor	as in poor
or	as in door

In each case remember that the singer must spend the greatest amount of durational time on the primary and not the secondary vowel.

SIGN POSTS TO GOOD DICTION

1. Good vowel forms are conceived and projected mentally. The action is first mental and then physical. Many vocal theorists would like to manipulate thought processes by making vowel forms instead of properly conceiving them.
2. Allow the tongue to lie flaccid on the bottom of the mouth, completely relaxed with no tension and well spread around the inner lower area of the mouth.
3. The muscle area around the lower and upper lips must be flaccid and responsive to the greatest degree of musculature facility.
4. Good diaphragmatic breathing is conducive to limpid diction.
5. Any extreme muscular action of lips, face, or jaw should be avoided. Protruding the lips is among those acts which will likely cause tension instead of relaxation.
6. The vowels have tonal potentials, not the consonants.
7. The voice consonants must be energized in order that the beauty, clarity, and perfect legato of phrase line may be achieved.
8. Every consonant must receive discriminative treatment.
9. The sibilant *S* should be produced with accuracy. The discriminative conductor who has been taught to be meticulous about the text, its meaning and its projection, will require his choristers to be intelligent in this matter.
10. Be insistent that the metre of the text is closely observed in order that proper pronunciation will be given words and no false consonant articulations will be forced upon syllables and words.
11. In using the *H* which is an aspirate be sure to attack the tone with a neat *stroke of the glottis* thereby eliminating as much breath in the tone as possible.
12. Diction is one of the most rewarding studies of vocal study.
13. The finishing consonant of any word or syllable is largely responsible for much mispronunciation.
14. The beginning and ending articulants of words or syllables must be delivered with preciseness, clarity, and rapidity. They must cause as little interference with the vowel as possible.

15. Though the vowels give shape to words they become projected mediums of speech only when they are either preceded or followed by consonants. Vowels in themselves are useless.
16. It is the vowel that gives emotional color to the tone.
17. In sustaining a given vowel in any word in a long passage or run, never fail to retain the purity of the fundamental vowel—never vitiate its true character.
18. Diphthongs are double vowel sounds consisting of the primary and secondary vowel. The primary is sustained for singing purposes while the secondary is only an accompaniment feature to the disappearance of the diphthong itself. Concentrate on the primary vowel and partial singing success will be yours.
19. It is the consonants that give metre to text and pulsation to ideas.
20. The aspirated (h) is not needed for clear articulate pronunciation. Painstaking choral conductors can have their singers produce the word "open" without (h) "open." If the reader will refer to the section on diction dealing with "dramatic hesitancy" in producing good pronunciation, he will get the idea involved in this suggestion.
21. The aspirated "h" which is suffixed to many words and prefixed to sequential words in phrases such as: "Many (h) and Many" can be eliminated if the singers are careful to sing the voiced consonants and use a mental hesitancy between words as in the process of stringing pearls on a string. There the stringer must place one beside the other. They are closely approximated to each other, yet each bead (word) retains its identity.

CHAPTER III

TONE PRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

AMONG the choral techniques needing first priority at the first rehearsal is tone quality. Heterogeneity of vocal tone is a natural characteristic of any beginning choir. The opening of the school year means the rebirth of conductoral idealisms for choral organizations. From the very first rehearsal the conductor must start to build tone. Welding together the group tonally is a science which takes great pains and ingenuity.

Most untutored and inexperienced choirs employ tone which is metallic, mouthy, colorless, diffused, strained, or which may be characterized by any number of descriptive words. In order for a choir to be tonally effective it must possess uniformity of good tone quality. The tone must be developed during rehearsal time.

If a conductor has a great number of singers to select from, he may use a selective quartet approach to the problem. This will materially aid in facilitating the ease with which he will be able to amalgamate the tone. By selecting balanced quartets (SATB) the conductor should be able to aid immeasurably the ultimate nature of the tone of the ensemble quartets which will eventually comprise the choir.

Throaty Tone Production. It may be safely said that poor breathing is the root of all evil in the production of tone. It is impossible to sing a free tone without the proper breath support. If the connection between the breath and the action of the vocal cords is not properly synchronized or coordinated, then it is obvious that tone production will be starved and the tone will be weak and emaciated. Without proper breath action beneath the level of the larynx box, rigidity of all areas above its level is absolutely insured. Tight throaty tone production results from a starved breath column.

The Vibratory Process. The air passing through the larynx is responsible, when expirated, for either speech or singing tone. At the instant when the cords are set in motion or a stroke of the glottis occurs, the entire area should be resilient physically to the demands of the throat. It is at this instant that the upper chest, neck, and lower jaw areas must be supple to the commands of the mind.

Naturally all activity is first mentally derived, the consequent activity being physical action. The concomitant conclusion is that the entire mental-physical, thought-action process should be completely supple. It is quite obvious that the voice training process should be psychologically and mentally directed instead of being a directed physical approach.

Breathing. The old Italian saying that "he who knows how to breathe well, knows how to sing well" is certainly applicable today as it was during the time of Porpora. If singing may be simply stated as being sustained speech, then it is obvious that without correct breath support effective singing is impossible. The choral conductor should by training know how to teach a simple effective method of breathing. Choristers over a period of three or four years should be able to learn some techniques for effective breathing and singing. If the conductor teaches his singers something about singing, he will be repaid doublefold for his effort. They will be able to think vocally for themselves.

It is only reasonable to hope that some choral singing can get beyond the rote stage. If people have a functional knowledge of breathing, they will be able to use it. Some important breathing sign-posts are:

1. The upper chest *should not* perceptibly rise and fall in the process of respiration during singing.
2. The lower ribs are activated into an outward expansive motion in the process of singing.
3. The proper method of breathing is to use the diaphragm. By using a combination of the diaphragm-lower rib method, the singer will be using the proper method.
4. Whoever expands the chest in the frontal area immediately below the sternum bone is breathing correctly. By expanding the walled-chest area during expiration the singer is preventing the diaphragm from taking on a convex shape. Such a process would prevent an optimum deflation of the lungs.
5. The inward motion of either the diaphragm or the abdomen or both during the process of inspiration is wrong.
6. During the process of respiration the chest wall from the collar bone to the end of the sternum bone should not drop. This condition or position is usually referred to as a deflated or sunken chest. This makes an impossible situation for the diaphragmatic process of singing—(inhalation-exhalation).
7. There is a downward movement of organs in the region below the diaphragm. In the process of inspiration the internal organs in the region of the viscera are pushed downward. This action is somewhat violent to the inactive individual who is for the first time studying singing. It causes these people upon occasion to feel momentarily faint.

Too Much Breath. Invariably voice students will insist that they do not have enough breath. The truth is that more often than not they inhale more air than is necessary for ordinary singing or speaking. Actually there is a comfortable margin in inspiration, beyond which any additional amounts only serve to make the singer incapacitated for singing. Try inhaling a maximum amount of air. It will be found that before the singer can proceed to sing, he will have to release some breath. It would appear that there is an amount of breath which if properly controlled and exhaled will adequately serve long phrases. Verse and composition are interchangeably woven together. The composer must give consideration to the verse; this automatically controls the length of the phrase. It will in turn determine the amount of breath.

Of first importance in rectifying the breathy tone which results from either under or over-balanced attack is the stroke of the glottis. (See page 28.) Stroke in this reference is articulation which comes from a proper muscular adjustment at the vocal cords at the time of initiating the tone. For each tone that is ejaculated there must be a neat muscular action by the glottis (the vocal cords are muscles) supported by breath. If too much breath is inspirated, the singer will be forced to expel some of it before he sings. If the attack is flaccid, the tone will be anemic and breathy. The trained ear of a vocal teacher can do much to correct breathy tone.

Another evidence of breathy tone is the common practice of singers in moving the diaphragm and yet upon careful investigation it will be found that the breath is not connected up with the singing process.

The relationship between breath and voice must be as one. It could be compared to a chip floating down stream. The water upon which the chip floats is the breath column, while the chip represents the voice. Both are indivisible and cannot exist effectively without the other. The problem involved here is getting the idea across that the body—the whole body—sings. People can move their diaphragms—they can give an outward impression that correct breathing is being used, yet through insistence upon *neck-singing,* they are far removed from correct singing. When the tone floats on the breath, the singer becomes vocally, musically, and artistically effective.

Importance of Quiet Breathing. Controlled quiet breathing is conducive to many singing virtues. It is the surest way to develop poise in preparation for stage appearance. If the individual will take deep, quiet, and judicious amounts of breath, he will improve intonation, tonal support, legato, tonal excitation, and general vocal efficiency.

The Singer's Power Plant. The vocal cords are set in motion by a stroke of the glottis which can only be initiated by the breath under the control of the mind. *People do not sing with their necks, but through them.* The lungs, the intercostal muscles, the diaphragm, the structure of the larynx box, the size of the resonating cavities of the pharynx-nasal-mouth-cavities, plus the amount of effective breath energization which can be brought to bear upon integrating the functions of each, will in turn determine the amount of volume emanating from a singer's mouth. All of the functions of the various areas or organs involved in the singing process must be integrated as each is interdependent upon the other. All these may in turn be aided by the emotional projective power of the individual's mind—this through the power of sustained speech which is song.

The Larynx. This is the voice box. In it are contained the vocal cords. In the larynx box about two-thirds from its bottom toward the top will be found the vocal bands or cords as they are more often called. As the voice box is connected to the hyoid bone it is obvious that any changing position of the tongue will affect the larynx. It is obvious that a natural tongue position will help insure a good larynx condition. Therefore it is important what happens to the tongue in the articulation of vowels, consonants, syllables, and words. Little have voice teachers recognized the action of the hyoid bone in relation to the voice box and the tongue. As a caution, the head position in singing should be observed. If the head would be tilted unduly forward or upward, it is palpable that such a position would have a deleterious effect upon the larynx. What is the position of the head? If the student is

five-foot-five inches, he should assume a head level that would be required of him in directly facing a person of comparable height.

Resonance. The size, shape and proportion of the resonance cavities have been stated by someone to be the fundamental determinants of quality. That this is in part true only has to be observed in comparing relative sizes, shapes, and proportions among the various instrument families of the symphony orchestra. If the instrument is made of wood, it possesses a given tone, and any alteration of its form and composition and proportions is bound to affect its quality.

Many people in considering the singing voice as an instrument forget in dealing with vocal instruction that resonance is a major factor in considering the entire function.

The voice is not produced in the mouth; to this area is reserved the major resonance of the entire singing function. It must be clear to the student that the vibrators, that is the vocal cords, are in the throat. It is there where the vocal cords are to be found, the point where the vibrations are set up, and then, in turn, these same vibrations find their resonance in the various cavities of the mouth and head. It is actually the resonance and not the original vibrations which are the end product—the voice.

Let us think in terms of an experiment. Suppose that the cavities or resonance chambers were non-existent above the level of the larynx—that is actual decapitation above the larynx box, and if the individual were made to function (hypothetically), the result would be a mere buzz. It is the resonating chambers that determine in final analysis the end result—the singing voice. Here we are referring to the functional process and not to the method of its improvement.

The principal resonating chambers which can be relied upon with certainty to fulfill such a function are the mouth cavity, the pharynx chamber which lies between the area of the throat into the mouth and up to the hard palate level at the back of the mouth, and the nasal cavity. In addition, the cheek bone, skull bone, and other semi-solid areas of the head in the area of the upper throat, mouth, teeth, and bony structure and nasal cavities have what might be termed a secondary influence upon resonance.

It is obvious that the nasal and secondary cavities are fixed as to their possibilities of becoming more effective through training. On the contrary, the pharynx area, which is the posterior region of the mouth and upper mouth, can immeasurably affect the quality of tone through sympathetic muscular function with the singing process. If the muscles surrounding the pharynx are free of any impedimenta, such as improper soft palate action, the tone should reflect such action. It is in this region that unsympathetic muscular action will be found if there is undue tension.

Now if our theory is sound about the size, shape, and proportion of the resonating cavities affecting sound, then it goes without further contradiction that the bore, length of resonating area, and their proportions will affect the pitch of the instrument. It must, however, be kept in mind that these areas will generally reflect like proportions in the larynx structure; the human voice is a phenomenally coordinated unit. In addition, there are the sinus cavities directly above the nasal cavities, both posterially and anteriorally, that complement other resonances and their contribution to tone is also significant.

The Employment of Vocal Dynamics and Breath Support. In regard to soft singing (mezza-voce) it is common for singers to fail to understand that as a person diminishes the volume of dynamics his breath support should increase proportionately. This rule is comparable to one for pronunciation which says that the softer the singing the more intensive and precise the articulation. By relaxing breath support the singer vitiates very often the tone quality and upon occasion the accuracy of his intonation. The tone *quality* may also become breathy and strident due to forcing which comes from improper breath support. Lack of support would induce muscular tension.

It must be remembered that we sing with our diaphragms, not with the throat but only through it. This distinction must be thoroughly understood before the singer is to make real progress. If vocal dynamics are to be achieved by forcing with the throat instead of singing as indicated, a crescendo or diminuendo of finely graduated degree will be impossible. The variation of degree must be achieved with proper singing breath support and not through throat pressures.

It is at this point that the writer finds choral techniques for good tone production most careless and undiscerning. The attack of the tone requires what is termed a stroke of the glottis. Upon a correct understanding of such a stroke is dependent quality of tone, yes, even volume.

Stroke of the Glottis. This implies a dynamic vocal utterance. The coup de glotte is a natural act of vocal utterance. What is the glottis? It is the space between the vocal cords. Whenever they come together we have a coup de glotte. It is at this point where countless thousands of singers reveal their poor vocal training. The important thing is how the coup de glotte is made. Every time a person utters a sound the cords come together. Whenever this coming-together takes place, there occurs the root fault of much of the vocal tone heard in America.

Many singers in the process of tonal delivery cause a rush of breath through the glottis (space between vocal cords) at the moment of vocal utterance. Any breath passing through (glottis) that is not entirely consumed in the process of singing is interfering with a complete approximation of the vocal cords. It is that instant, just before tonal emission, that is crucial in tonal production. The whole error can be corrected through mental control. Patience and conscientious study will materially help in improving tonal quality if the mental concept is corrected. Singing is more than an animal process; it is fundamentally mental.

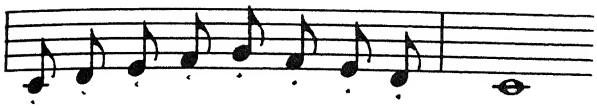
A proper concept of the vowel form supported by breath at the instance of attack will bring about a neater stroke of the glottis which is bound to insure better tone production; better tone production means better tone quality and intonation. This so few people understand. The action of control established by a mentally poised vowel concept will aid in establishing a well-poised attack. The student should practice in order to eliminate any rush of breath preceding the *stroke.* The ear will guide both student and teacher in detecting any ineffectualness.

Tonal Attack. A good tonal attack will improve intonation, clarity, and quality; crisp and articulate enunciation and pronunciation, and a general tonal virility will be more generally secured. Singing is a communicative art because it employs a language. The more a tone can effectively engender thought action upon the auditor, the more worthwhile will be its effectiveness.

Little vocalizes at rehearsal time will go far toward improving the "tonal attacks" of the singing choir. If the singers employ the following techniques, the conductor will note improvement in tone in a short time.

Illustration:

TONAL ATTACK



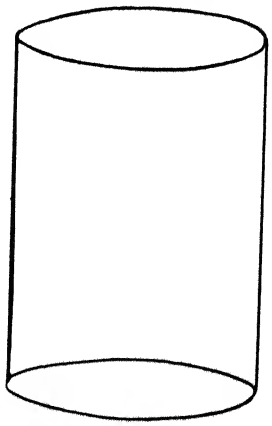
(Move chromatically up scale, but only as high as convenient to all)

Ha, Ha, Ha, etc.
Ho, Ho, Ho, etc.
Hoo, Hoo, Hoo, etc.

Sing these exercises and other voweled syllables for three full measures or more resting on c′ for four tonally sustained counts. Every time you raise the five sequential tones, moving chromatically up the scale, the final note will always be the tonic. Use "ha"—this is an aspirate. It is very difficult to do because the "h" has a definite tendency to pull the breath out of the singing tone and make it breathy. If its use proves too breathy a result, use just the vowel. This should be used until the student can hear what the conductor is after. Variations of this simple exercise are manifold. It is good practice to use legato, but be sure that pitches are accurately produced.

Mental Concept versus Bore of Tone Concept. In vocalizes it will be found that the dove-tailing of registers can be more easily facilitated if a conical mental concept is utilized. If the mental concept in ascending scale vocalizes is spread, the natural concomitant is devitalized, white, vitiated, and a general debility of singing tone. Any tone in order to be rich in quality must possess overtones. The choral director must effectively show his singers how to retain tonal beauty. The following device portrayed diagramatically and thoroughly understood by the singers will go far toward aiding the choristers in dove-tailing the commonly discussed mouth register with that of the head. If the natural bore of tone (heft or timbre) of any voice could be represented by the cylindrical shape in (a)

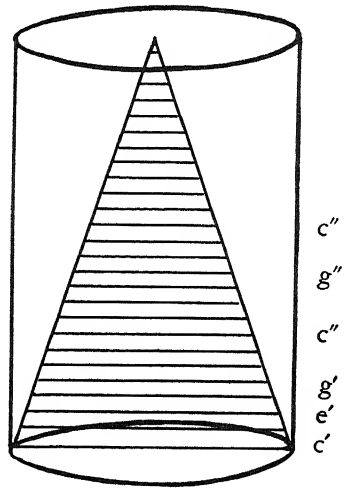
(a)



and if a cone could be superimposed upon it, the following very beneficial register concept can be elicited which will aid the singer.

Discussion of Concept. Let us assume that (B) is the conical *mental concept* inherent to a given voice. The base of the diagram is widened purposively to indicate the region within which the voice has great depth of sonority. It is the area wherein the singer finds singing a comfortable experience in the middle of the body—the pit of the back region. The lines ascending the cone shaped diagram indicate the gradual lessening breadth of concept as the singer mentally approaches his higher tones; these narrowing concepts are somewhat comparable to pitch sensations assuming hypothetical areas from the pit of the back to the top of the head.

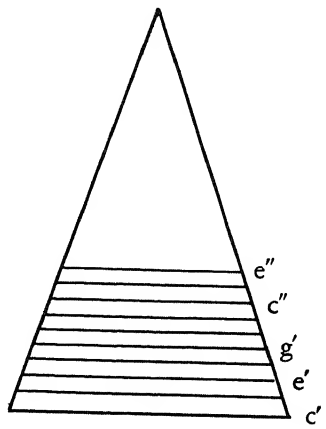
(B)



It is impossible to mentally sense a high tone and then attempt to sing a low one; the two acts are diametrically opposed. The singer must change his mental concept and be mentally adjusted to changing pitch sensations.

The hypothetical bottom of this cone, disregarding its width, is applicable anywhere in the lower part of any singing voice. Let us, however, take one for the entire range of a given voice (C).

(C)



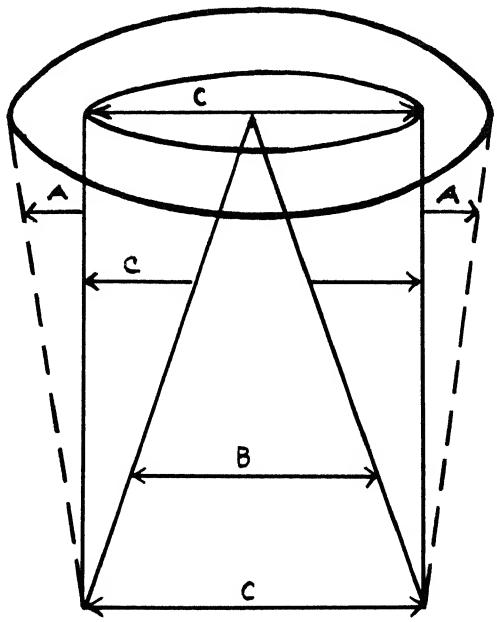
Let us suppose that a singer was vocalizing from c′ to g′. It would be imperative for him to be conscious of a style of singing which has a gradually narrowing mental concept. If, instead of this gradually narrowing mental picture, he inadvertently spreads his mental concept, the result is bound to broaden unduly the vowel form in the throat. This will produce breathy, poorly focused, and colorless tones. In addition, the singer will not be able to bridge the lower-middle and the middle-upper registers.

Illustration (C). Suppose a′—e″ represent the bridging area which is common to the approximate beginning and arriving of the mouth and head resonances. Thus, in approaching the a′ the singer must mentally adjust his pitch sensations in relation to the gradually narrowing focus of each sequentially higher pitch.

Bore and Mental Concept and Tone Energization. The great advantage to be derived from utilizing this device is the fact that the mental adjustment and concomitant energization of tone which comes from it will invariably enhance tonal beauty. The tone whenever spread is invariably spread mentally—the physical result is only a natural consequence. The important objective is to sing a dynamic range from soft to loud without ruining the quality of the tone; the conical bore concept has proven worthwhile in partially attaining this objective. Most singers when they attempt to sing loud tones invariably ruin the quality of the tone because they spread it by inverting the concept.

Illustration (D).

A = spread
B = concept
C = bore



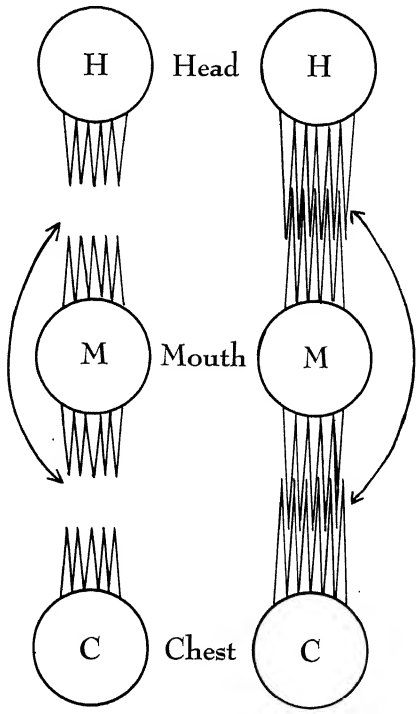
Whenever the spread concept is employed, the singers invariably push the tone beyond its natural limits. The tone ceases to be natural. Illustration (D) indicates that the tone is beyond the control of the singer—the voice is no longer characteristic of him. Many singers' voices rarely reveal their natural beauty—the inherent voice is generally spread beyond recognition. Then, too, many singers have many different voice qualities within the gamut of their singing range.

Covered Tones. These are the most difficult for singers to attain, secure with confidence, and utilize effectively. Both men and women singers use them. In the male voices they are more confounding and cause many anxious moments. By bringing the head resonance as far down into the singing range as possible, good resonance passages are more easily achieved. Most singers carry their middle or mouth register up to the point of physical pain and then either choke off or are forced to "break" the voice and use head tones. The trouble with this system is that a given voice will have two or more very definite tone qualities and the singer will generally yell the upper tones to the point of unpleasantness to the listener.

The singer must learn to dove-tail the various registers so that there is no noticeable break or transition point between the chest (heavy), mouth (medium), or head (light) types of tone. Though the break between the middle and head register in the case of the bass voice may occur at the fifth line on the bass staff (bass staff), he must learn to prepare for the bridging of registers below that level (Illustration E^2). He must be prepared to make the change a gradual instead of an abrupt one. By the time he has reached d′ or e′ of the bass staff he will be in the head tone quality and the gap between the tone a and d′ will be nicely bridged.

Illustration (E^1)

Illustration (E^2)

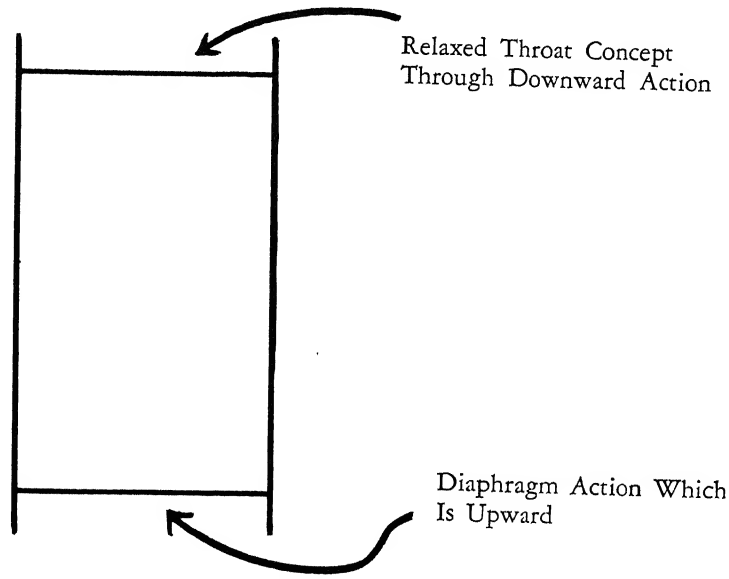


The Downward-Upward Action (Example F). A very beneficial device for aiding voice students in securing freedom of throat action while they are singing is to require them to get the cupping-in-action of the air while supporting or following through with the breath from beneath (diaphragmatic area). When this attitude and action are first considered it would seem that the singer is doing two things diametrically opposed to each other. On the contrary this is not so. The former is a mental-physical attitude which is operating while the real physical act of breathing is being employed.

The cupping-in-downward action of the throat again gives the singer the mental concept of opening the back of the throat. This is in an area where much vocal abuse is committed. The back of the throat must be open, free, relaxed, and in a state of complete flexibility. The majority of our singers have the notion that they are singing with the throat. These and other devices which are being suggested to the reader are for the purpose of developing a point of view which insists that the *singer sing through his throat.* (See Illustration (F))

Now if the singer will cup in with one hand in the direction of the mouth and pull up from the midriff area with the other, the attitude and physical action will simulate what actually happens.

(F)



It must be kept in mind that no matter what happens at the voice box (larynx) level, the (thoracic) chest cavity must be kept supple and the breath support must be an ever present realization from the diaphragmatic line up toward the point where the tone is produced in the larynx.

This whole process involves the establishment of desirable mental situations or attitudes which it is hoped will result in good singing habits. Two ideas must be kept absolutely in mind if a desirable result is to be obtained. One is that the downward action from the lower jaw and throat is a mental attitude whereas the upward action from the diaphragmatic area is a definitely physical one. This downward mental and upward physical attitude is positively one of the most beneficial vocal techniques for the facilitation of a free singing mechanism.

The Relaxed-Lowered Tongue Position. It will be found upon examination that invariably inexperienced singers employ a raised tongue position for all vowel forms. This is contrary to all good relaxed tonal production. The tongue lies rooted to the bottom of the mouth. It is enmeshed with myriads of muscles which are attached to the lower jaw structure. Those singers who have approached the ideal singing style, that which eliminates any evidences of stridency, have attained an important objective toward beautiful tone production.

If the voice student will allow the tongue to lie still, in the bottom part of the mouth with its edges touching the lower teeth throughout its entire arch, he will find that muscular relaxation is necessary. If the tongue is quiet and relaxed, as in the "ah" position, and the jaw is widely separated in the singing of both lower and upper tones, it will be found that the singer will be able to sing the upper tones with greater ease. If while the student is singing "ah" in the upper reaches of his register, he closes his jaw, it will result in tension which will not permit him to sing with free larynx and tonal action. If the singer will develop this type of relaxed-lowered tongue throat attitude for the singing of the open vowels "ah" and "oh," he will have less occasion to sing with tension when producing the bright vowels such as "e," "eh," and "ih."

Think Tone Horizontally and Not Vertically. In the singing of vocalizes in the early stages of vocal practice it will be found that incorrect mental concepts interfere with freedom of tonal production. If the concept of the tone passing through the throat is used, it will be easier to reconcile logic with this suggestion.

There is no reason why a singer should make any conscious physical adjustments in the manner he sings the five notes beginning with the tonic of any key. The employment of any physical effort involves a conscious effort which can only produce a tension during the act of singing.

It has been found very beneficial to have the singer move his forearm horizontally in front of him while singing ascending and descending passages. He must consciously direct his attention to the act that is natural and conducive to the ease of tonal emission. Singers seem to possess a subconscious notion that each ascending pitch must receive a new adjustment or position in the throat during the act of singing.

Then, too, the idea of moving up and down any given group of five or more notes gives the impression that there is an "up and downness." This is obviously not so. In arriving at our objective which is a supple singing mechanism, we are judging the end result as the initial cause or source of productive action.

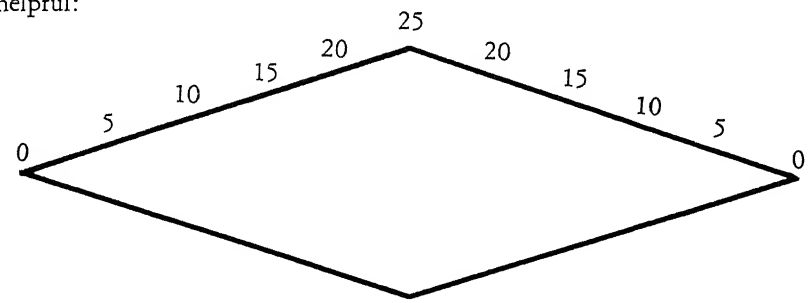
Blatant, White and Colorless Tones. Those singers who fail to understand the voice properly, invariably use blatant, yelling, and white tone quality in the middle, middle-upper, and upper reaches of the singing range. They are unduly forcing the mechanism to function improperly. (Using the voice improperly as the above structural vocal acts would indicate results in the tightening of the throat, tongue, and muscles in the periphery of the mouth. The tone qualities disparagingly referred to above are the result of open mouth singing. Open mouth singing is (without below and upper resonances) invariably hard in quality and lacking in tonal beauty. A nicely poised head resonated tone (head resonance) quality can be delightfully free and tonally interesting. If it were not, that in itself would be sufficient proof that something is radically wrong with the singing process.

It must be remembered that the open-throat style of singing invariably means that the tone is in the throat—that the throat is doing the work. Instead, the tone

should be focused forward as much as possible. It uses the forward hard palate as a sounding board. There is the sensation of the tone resonating in the anterior instead of the posterior region of the mouth.

Dynamics. This means loudness and softness of a tone. It is a powerful control factor in producing musical nuances. To obtain a wide differentiation between loudness (fff) and softness (ppp) is indeed difficult. More difficult yet is the obtaining of a discriminate usage of tone, for upon it dynamics are absolutely dependent.

People who want to sing musically must remember that extreme loudness—that which is beyond the capability of the producing instrument—results in unmusical tone. In both solo and ensemble choral compositions it will be noticed that dynamics are indicated. A marking of (f) is a relative one. It means a loud tone—loud for the instrument which is to produce it. All choral organizations are limited by the voices which comprise their personnel. The effectiveness of a group's tone is the sole determinant. In teaching brass horn players there is the constant vigil against *overblowing* the tone. It is a rare occasion to hear choral conductors or vocalists think in terms appropriate to the dynamic potential of their group. In building a mental concept for proper dyanmic range the following diagram might be helpful:



If 0 represents the softest audible tone, and though the degrees of dynamic range to 25 may be but a relative concept, yet it is a helpful device for giving dynamic ideas. It should appear obvious that a mark of (fff) at 25 is not truly representative of (fff) for all choral organizations or soloists. If 25 is the optimum for a vocal soloist, then it should be perfectly obvious that some vocalists in comparison have but a dynamic potential of 15 or 20. Dynamic intensity must fit the group. If choral directors were more cognizant of this simple understanding of dynamic calibrations, more muscianship would be demonstrated in choral performances.

The Facial Mask. All previous discussion regarding the lips, tongue, teeth, and various resonating cavities is in the final analysis encased by the facial mask. The muscles of the entire area thus designated are valuable as means of interpreting certain types of songs. Expression of human emotion—ideas—are dependent upon how subtly the performing singer can utilize the components of the facial mask to advantage. The successful singer is one who has mastered advantageously all phases of his vocal and interpretive equipment; without such an achievement an intelligent interpretation of the printed page can be only a partial success.

Into his facial mask all tonal techniques and ideas are concentrated. He who has not learned now to energize his tone in the mask of his face is far removed from the art of artistic singing. Very few singers have plumbed the hidden depths

of tonal energization, good diction, properly focused tone, limpid-effective articulation, and vibrant tonal resonance. These are all inherently possible in the mask of the face.

Emotion and Tone Color. To be a singer is one thing, but to be an emotionally effective singer is a rare achievement. Singing is an expressive art, and a person's success is somewhat in proportion to the extent to which he is able to interpret a given text. This requires the ability to project ideas through gesture and facial expression with the aid of tone. In addition to these there are the factors of tonality, rhythm, tempo, harmony, melody and many other musical components which when fused impinge their forces upon the personality of man.

Now it is palpable that there are varying degrees of the singer's ability to express human emotion. It is the job of the choral conductor or the singing teacher to help others realize more effectively the various features of tonal expressiveness which can be altered or immeasurably helped by training. There are some singers who by nature are able to do most of these naturally. There are others, and this includes a majority of the average run of singers, who need much instruction in the various phases of song interpretation which help to elicit interpretative and emotional expressiveness. Remember! The message is the thing.

Artistic Humming. One of the most ineffective pieces of choral technique employed by choral directors is their use of the hum. There is an apparent lack of attention to the method of its production. Generally the tone produced by the hum is flat in quality, of questionable pitch, and rhythmically lifeless. The fundamental evil in this whole process is the spreading of the bore of tone and the continued usage of mouth resonance for its production. One of the rarest bits of singing technique is its judicious use.

Here again if the director will require his singers to concentrate upon the form of a vowel in order to achieve an end result, he will obtain a much more effective tone. In the initial stages, require the singers to produce a flexible *oo* without any tinge of humming. The lips are not pursed and the singers should concentrate upon the pure vowel form. Now ask them to bring the lower jaw gradually to a closing position of the mouth, yet not firmly set together the center portion of the two lips. The veils of the palate and the palate itself become very relaxed and the singer must get the idea of the hum emanating in a forward direction through the nose and not the mouth; any effort to *make* the hum between the lips and feel the sensation in the posterior area of the mouth will certainly induce hard, strident, and unmusical hums. The important feature of the hum suggested here is that the singer must never cease concentrating on the fundamental bore of tone acompanying the *oo* vowel.

IMPORTANT SIGN POSTS TO GOOD SINGING

1. Female voices generally have a greater range in the head voice.
2. Male voices have greater range in the chest register.
3. There seems to be considerable evidence in favor of the notion that within each register there is a higher and lower area. The lower division of the upper register is the dove-tailing register quality which is quite similar to the upper area of the register immediately below it.
4. In the lower notes of the lowest register, the entire area of the vocal bands is in vibration.

5. Most singers are ineffectual vocally, long before they should be. This is due to improper vocal techniques. One of the first signs of vocal senescence is the loss of the ability to sing effective mezza-voce tones. The singer is left with but hard tones. Some singers have never learned to produce a satisfactory mezza-voce. This entire problem is in large measure due to poor vocal techniques.
6. The tongue must be absolutely relaxed.
7. The soft palate and its area should be flexible and relaxed.
8. In singing the singer should have the feeling of tone resonating in as many areas as he is consciously able to use.
9. All facial muscles of the cheek, lip regions, and upper cheek should be completely responsive to the singing act. The less tension the better. All muscles should be flaccid if possible.
10. Every time the singer inhales he must take a comfortably full breath. The diaphragmatic and intercostal muscular regions must be relaxed. Most singers are never relaxed during the act of inhaling during the singing process.
11. All muscles in the neck and especially all musculature in the vicinity of the larynx should be without tension.
12. The singer's head should be leveled straight in front of him—that is—facing directly a person of height comparable to his.
13. An excellent warming-up vocalize for either neophyte or professional is the use of *no, na, nee,* or *nay.* Be sure there is a strong sensation of *N.* There should be a feeling of tone being directed in the mask of the face. This technique gives good resonance sensations.
14. Any singer who is wise never rehearses his highest tones. Each throat contains just so many good tones. Most beginning singers are sung out of their good tones when they want them. Do not employ the practice of bellowing upper tones. Always use the head in vocal study.
15. Mental nervousness means physical tension. Before a performance a soloist will benefit greatly if he will lie completely relaxed on a cot with his arms outstretched at his sides. It is amazing how twenty minutes of such a practice will tone up muscular responsiveness.
16. It is a common observation among singers that a tired body will find its possessor capable of singing very relaxed tones. It is obvious; the musculature is flaccid. Consequently, the tones which are the result of muscular and mental coordination are free and relaxed.
17. A most dangerous practice is to employ a spread *OH* formation during the act of singing. If the concept of the *OH* is too large, the spread formation of the throat at the posterior section will induce falsity of intonation and breathy tone quality. The result will be a tone of poor quality with poor carrying potentialities.
18. Vocal hoarseness may be caused from the wrong vocal method.
19. Ask the singer to sing *NAH,* by first mentally sensing the tone, then with a very short preliminary hum, follow it almost simultaneously by a dropped jaw position and the syllable *NAH.* The result will be as natural a tonal delivery as possible; the correct mental concept is needed first!
20. No great improvement in vocal production can be attained until the student is able to hear his own voice. It is common observation that a friend may point out to another friend that he has an improper pronounciation inflection. Not

until the singer in question is able to *hear* his present error in relation to the new way will he be able to make improvement.

21. Greater success with the training of vocal registers seems to issue from a working with the head register down instead of the chest register up to and through the middle one.
22. Vocalists should be cautioned against using stentorian tones during vocalizes.
23. In the beginning stages of voice production and study it would be better if the pupil could take one or two very short lessons with his teacher every day. If the trained ear of the teacher is not present, it is impossible to make intelligent progress until the ear is newly attuned.
24. Short, intelligent vocalizes are of great help—quite likely more profitable than extended hour practices. What do I mean by short periods? Fifteen minutes for beginners and twenty to thirty minutes for advanced pupils. I'm referring only to vocalizes in this discussion.
25. Vocal cords are muscles. They contain energy and if it is burned up through usage, the muscles begin to labor. It is at that point that vocal impairment takes place. If the vocal cords are fatigued, effort enters into the singing process.
26. There should be a great amount of singing in the classical style. Dramatic singing—and continuous dramatic singing—is not musically productive. The student invariably gets into the habit of applying the dramatic style to the interpretation of all types of song literature.
27. Once the tone has been properly poised in the mask of the face, once there is the proper balance between the breath and resistance at the point of vocal attack, once the tone has been properly energized without spreading its inherent tonal bore, then, and then only will real tonal progress be made. If the mental concept is large instead of concentrated, the tone will be diffused and completely ruined.
28. Tonal beauty depends upon the proper energization or reinforcement of all factors involved in the process of singing—the mind and its mental concept—proper bodily coordinations—and the proper balance between the mind and body. The mind must be trained to elicit from the throat and resultant resonating cavities beautiful tone.
29. There is no such thing as singing without effort! There is, however, singing with relaxation without tension. The arm raised at one's side may be relaxed muscularly, yet, there can be relaxation within it instead of tension.
30. Deep, quiet breathing is beneficial to relaxed singing.
31. It is possible to take too large a breath prior to the act of singing. It is recommended that for average phrase length the singer take but a normal amount. The important action is the process of exhalation.
32. A singer must learn to control the breath once it has been taken.
33. When the singer takes a breath just prior to the emission of tone, it must be understood that before the sound of tone is audible (before he sings) the singer hold his breath—the release of breath and tone are simultaneous.
34. All organs in the throat or mouth, all muscular areas of the throat, tongue, cheeks, lips, chin, etc.—all these in the process of singing must be in proper balance with each other if a well-poised singing voice is to function properly. If at any time any one of the areas concerned is in opposition to this coordination, then resistance will interfere with tonal production.

CHAPTER IV

CHOIR ORGANIZATION

Selecting Personnel. Among the acts preparatory to the rehearsal are an accurate and intelligent testing and classification of the singer's voice. It is a most important consideration in bringing about good a cappella choir results. Voice tryouts are imperative. They can be both effective and yet of a simple nature. The question of what vocalizes or exercises to use is not as important as is the testing and classifying of voices, the question of breathing and vocal attack, and diction in choral singing.

Testing and Classifying Voices. What are some of the more musicianly considerations in testing voices? Among those factors having a high priority are: quality, range, breathiness of tone, intonation, and vocal dynamics. The temperament of the individual should also be closely observed. Space does not permit a detailed analysis of these factors. Basic to an understanding of voice classifications is the actual method of assigning parts.

Testing voices is a very important phase of building a successful choir. It is time well spent. It is an opportunity for the conductor's personality to impinge itself upon the singer in question. It helps to build esprit-de-corps. Singers like to know whether the conductor of their organization is human or not.

Private or Group Testing. There are many considerations involved in testing voices. Are you as the conductor selecting singers for choral singing with no attempt at eliminating those whose voices are weak, poor in quality, lack range, yet may be capable of reproducing pitches correctly? Is it the conductor's purpose to select only the better voices for superb choir performance?

It is unfortunate for the conductor of choral singing who finds it impossible, due to the pressure of duties, to maintain but one chorus. His ultimate success is hampered by the following difficulties:

1. He is constantly feeding inexperienced material into his partially experienced organization.
2. He is forced to fuse people into his choir who have had little or no performance experience and as a consequence the first few concerts of any season find his singing group not well poised mentally.
3. He is forced to build up choral disciplines which though established with his more experienced singers have not been established with those who have had less opportunity.

If but one chorus is maintained, the conductor is forced in many situations to sacrifice standards in face of many other democratic considerations. Just what are they?

1. If good representation in choral activities is desired, the conductor would modify his standards in order to accommodate as many singers as possible. This is in line with making *music serve all.*
2. Experience, vocal ability, and musicianship should measure up to minimum standards. Participation is the major criteria. Who knows, out of the large choral groups there may develop greater participation with the result that additional choirs may be engendered.

Private Testing. In large general choirs, as that one to which we have already alluded, private try-outs, if at all possible, are generally appreciated by the average singer. With inexperienced singers it just seems to be the more humane approach. The private voice test is of great benefit both to the singer and to the conductor. The latter can give many helpful hints as he can more accurately assess the candidate's general muscianship.

Group Testing. Group testing does expedite hearing a large number of voices at one time. What are some of the techniques for using the method in testing women's voices?

1. Large groups of singers may be heard at one time. The conductor can walk up and down the aisles listening principally for range. It has been the writer's practice to begin with the pitch of g′ (second line, treble staff, asking the singing individuals to ascend the scale up to d″ or e″.
2. Have the singers use a neutral syllable such as *LOH* or *LAH.* This is preferred due to the fact that an open mouth formation is possible with the tongue relaxed in the base of the mouth. This is not a guarantee that the singer will use this relaxed tongue position; the device is, however, very productive of good results.
3. Make no comment while passing from singer to singer. Make a mental note of those who appear to sing with relaxation. This can be deduced from noticing neck and facial muscles of each during the singing process.
4. After observing those who can sing the fourth line d″ or fourth space e″ with ease, eliminate those who find it difficult and continue on up to g″ above the staff. Those who can sing the upper g″ with ease may be temporarily classed as first sopranos. It must be understood that this group method is not a final answer. The writer likes this approach when dealing with an entirely new group of singers. After this preliminary test, the conductor resorts to the small group approach. Use two or three singers at a time. After much experience with singers, a conductor can become very proficient with this system of testing (temporarily, but not permanently satisfactory for general choral singing).

Group Testing for the Rest of the Voices. The general procedure described for the sopranos is utilized for the altos, tenors, and basses. The only difference is that the range for each of these groups changes as we go from one to another. The following suggestions should prove helpful:

1. With the altos it is advisable to begin with d′, first space below the treble staff. The ranges suggested under the heading *Testing and Classifying Voices* is likewise applicable at this juncture.
2. With the tenors it is advisable to begin with g, fourth space of the bass staff. (See section on *Testing and Classifying Voices*).
3. With the basses it is practical to begin with c, second space of the bass staff. The writer has found it very helpful to have all in this group sing down the scale from the note indicated. The quality and lower range of the voice will very quickly indicate whether the individual in question is first or second bass.

It must be emphasized that no try-out is superior to an individual hearing by the conductor. Voice range and quality are not the sole criteria for evaluating the singer's actual worth to a choral organization.

Balance of Parts. A discriminating conductor always gives considerable attention to the matter of balance. It is well known that mature tenors, if their numbers were equalized with those of the other voices, would have a disastrous effect upon ensemble balance. To state that exact proportions should be observed in creating a choir of forty, fifty, or sixty voices is likewise absurd. Unless a person is dealing with a unique situation, there is little likelihood of there being proper distribution of voice parts.

If it is difficult to balance properly quality and dynamic range with the singers selectively chosen for any chorus, the discriminative conductor can equalize inequalities if he works for blend. Students must learn to blend their voices by listening to each other while singing songs for artistic presentation. Many painstaking choir leaders have been known to build their choirs by quartets or octets. Select quartets for their individual blending merits; assembling a great many quartets is relatively simple. Quartets thus established will derive much pleasure from such grouping and they may be assigned to work out the harmonizations in advance of rehearsal time.

Sight-Reading Examinations. Generally speaking, sight-reading tests should not be given. Why? The conductor will just be disappointed. Vocalists though they may have had some musical training are invariably poor sight-readers. Especially is this true when they are compared with instrumentalists.

Sight-reading skill is not essential to good choral singing. Lack of it means that the conductor will have to work the harder. Many good concert singers are notoriously poor sight-readers. People who become members of a chorus do improve with experience in their sight-reading skill. It almost goes without saying that thousands of vocalists would have been left out of choruses if they were selected for this ability.

Seating and Intonation. The *summum bonum* of all a cappella singing is good intonation. Every effort must be made to see to it that all singing is done in relation to accurate pitch. A student may sing in tune, yet when subjected to part-singing may have difficulty in singing his part independently. By inserting this individual between two strong sight-readers, the conductor will undoubtedly help his independence in part singing. Then, too, another device used frequently is to place the less independent ear in front of an entire section and allow him to have the entire tone of his section come from behind and around him. This is not the place for a discussion of intonation, but merely to indicate that seating may in part help those students who find that independent singing, while singing in parts, gives them moments of great concern. The writer has found that if an individual singer is at fault, he will hurriedly hear about it from one of the more conscientious members of the organization.

Award System. It is a common practice to offer some type of awards for service or participation in secondary or collegiate choral organizations. This traditional practice is in keeping with the award idea which is common to all school activities coming under the heading of extra-curricular. The recognition for service is generally recognized by giving the participant a key, sweater, pin, chenille letter, or some other form of jewelry which the recipient can wear. The bases for these awards are sundry. The following are characteristic of many practices.

1. A point system is set up giving the organization member so many points for length of service, the points being accumulative toward some award which may be any one of the above mentioned types.

2. Awards may be offered for each year's service.
3. Awards may be offered only after three or four years' service. This system has proven most satisfactory because it recognizes greater continuous length of service, thereby justifying an award of greater expense. Using this system, the basis for offering honors has greater significance.
4. The awards are generally a recognition of service. The very fact that members of an organization have been accepted, is not the basic criterion for awarding honors. They must be awarded on the basis of attendance and meritorious service to the organization.

THE CHILD VOICE

The child voice is a term that in itself signifies the voice of the boy or girl prior to adolescence. It is at this period that their voices are alike, except that the boy's voice may be somewhat fuller or heavier in timbre than that of the girl. Although they are different in sex, a boy upon occasion has been found to sing much higher than the group of girls with whom he is singing. There is justification for the statement that prior to adolescence all children's voices are soprano in range and in quality. The aim of all early music education is to give these children an opportunity to develop the proper use of their voices.

Care. The voice of the growing child is a delicate instrument which demands constant attention—especially during the period of puberty. Early vocal strain may effect permanent injury to the singing apparatus. Emphasis should be placed on beauty and purity of tone rather than on volume. Any tone that is coarse, strident, or raucous should be discouraged. The head voice should be used at all times. No chest resonance should be tolerated.

Long before boys become basses, and they have a lowered quality of tone, they attempt to sing as though they had on long pants. They want that feeling of being men. Then, too, children will sing a song an octave lower, which is not always detected by the inexperienced teacher. If the teacher uses the right approach she won't have to worry about the boys thinking that they are *sissies*. It is the type of music that generally gives them the impression that singing is sissified.

Pupil Help. The teacher should teach her pupils how to distinguish head tone. We tend to listen for those things to which our ears are attuned. A friend of the writer's sells high class bootery. Due to the fact that he is so conscious of shoes, whenever he is introduced to people socially, this person invariably looks down at the other individuals' feet. He is shoe conscious. It is the job of the teacher to make her children tone conscious.

The pupil must be expected to open his mouth properly. Most people sing with a nearly closed mouth. That statement sounds preposterous, but is literally so. People sing through nothing but a slit opening between their teeth. It is the teacher's job to see that they open their mouths. In regard to the dynamic range of children's voices they should sing neither with a hushed tone or a stentorian one. Either would result in a pernicious vocal habit. The hushed type would produce a breathy speaking and singing voice, while the latter would produce harmful vocal effects if practiced over a long period of time. Many singers who have forced their voices beyond their physiological limit for singing loud tone have developed nodules or corns on their vocal cords and have temporarily lost their voices. To say, however, that the child should not sing a loud tone is asinine. If he plays as a

normal child, he is very likely to yell once in a while. Singing is just sustaining that yell which would produce a loud tone of poor quality.

The Teacher's Job. By watching the child's countenance, his neck muscles, and by listening to the tone, it is very easy to detect what is happening to the singing voice in the child. A strained sounding quality, wincing of the face, or a distending of the neck muscles will certainly indicate to the teacher that something is wrong. If the teacher selects a song that is pitched too high, the children are certain to strain their voices. If the song is too low, the tones may become guttural, breathy, coarse, or forced. Before children come to school there are countless numbers who have never sung a head tone. Many children have but rare opportunities to hear their mothers sing. Other children are discouraged from showing early signs of musical interest. Some of them have been made fun of by their parents just as soon as the child shows some artistic inclination.

THE CHANGING VOICE

Boys' Voices. Although all voices do adjust themselves from pre-adolescence to the mature stage, the change or mutation is much more severe in the boy's voice than in the girl's. The period of adolescence for the normal boy is from eleven (11) to fourteen (14), and with the girls from ten (10) to thirteen (13) years of age. It is during this period (junior high) that music teaching is difficult and proves to be a hair-raiser for many teachers. All the ingenuity, personality, and good judgment of the teacher are needed. The teacher must have some knowledge of the child voice if she plans to teach boys and girls at the junior high school level. With each child the vocal problem becomes a personal one. To say that singing should stop is doubtful. But certainly singing for the boy should be closely guarded. At the junior high level voices should be tested very often. The boys should have their voices tested at least once a month. In the case of particularly unstable voices they may need testing every week. The objective of frequent testing is to check the voice as it descends from soprano on down through all the classifications of the human voice. Some boys who were originally sopranos become tenors, while others become basses.

Girls' Voices. Although the voice change in the girls is not so noticeable, nevertheless it takes place. Although the symptoms of a change are not too many, the girl will notice during this period that on some days her voice sings easily, while on others she has difficulty in singing freely. Sometimes she will tell her teacher that she can sing higher than usual while on other occasions she may state that her voice is heavier or stronger in volume. Her voice becomes breathy. Sometimes she will ask to sing the lower part. Many times the singing act will produce a frown. One rule is certain. Whenever there is a frown, there is trouble. It is just like human temperature. Whenever an individual runs a fever, something is usually wrong. The soprano girls should never be asked to sing as loudly as the boys. Sweetness and ease of tone production are the objective.

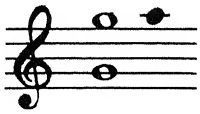
Voice Testing. After the fourth grade, voice tests should be given at least twice each year, once at the beginning of each semester, and as many other times as the teacher feels that time warrants. Voice testing of adolescent voices is a very ticklish job. It requires knowledge. It is an event that requires the teacher to think of the conservation of a human gift, and not its exploitation. Methods of testing voices vary according to locality and conditions, and also according to the ability of the teacher doing the testing. For instance, in the warmer climates chil-

dren's voices start to lower earlier. In some places testing is done as early as the second and third grades; at least they have two-part singing.

It has been found in the testing of boys' voices that group testing is very impractical. It is almost impossible to do adequate testing without individual work. Boys' voices during the mutation (change) are especially confusing to women teachers, and not much less so to men.

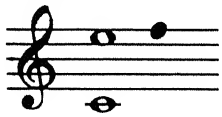
Range of Children's Voices. Children's voices can be divided into at least five different categories. All the ranges indicated are for intermediate and junior high school singing. If the sopranos are eighth graders, singing in a four year high school chorus, they should sing *a″* if they are to sing the first soprano part.

I. Boys and Girls
First Soprano (A)



Only those who can sing within the compass indicated, easily, freely, and with childlike flexibility, should be assigned to this part. If a boy or girl must force the voice in the higher limits of the register, he or she is not to sing the first soprano part. Do not sacrifice the individual in order to have a balance of parts. Although the smaller boys of the class may want to imitate the older ones, a lower part should be assigned only if the voice warrants that part. Their time will come.

II. Boys and Girls
Second Soprano (B)

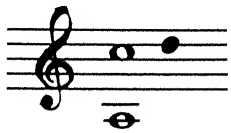


The second soprano part is characterized by those voices which are thicker in quality and don't have quite the flexibility of the more brilliant first sopranos. This part is usually the safe one for most of the boys and girls due to the limited character of the range. Within its limits, the voice may be used easily, with no great danger of forcing.

The question arises, what should be done with second sopranos during the singing of music written for SATB (four parts). The teacher should indicate to them that they sing the first soprano, eliminating certain upper tones when four part music is used. They should be told individually what high notes they are to eliminate. It is always possible that a second soprano will develop the range of her voice and be able to sing first soprano after her voice matures.

When the boy's voice begins to lower, the quality will be somewhat heavier; the production of tone somewhat more difficult; the tone may be less brilliant and more breathy. To state how long a boy remains on first or second soprano is very difficult. The second soprano stage is the first period of a noticeable difference in the range of the boy's voice; it is the beginning of the downward change. When the voice is changing to another part, the lower area of the voice is becoming thicker in quality and the upper is more harsh, brilliant, and frequently requires physical effort for the production of tone.

III. Boys and Altos.
Alto (C)

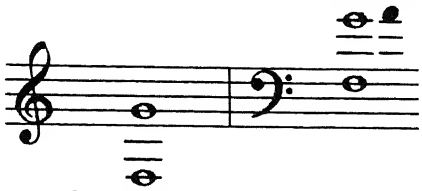


Now and then we find a girl who shows every tendency of becoming a contralto (alto). This person can safely carry the alto part in the range indicated under (C). However, these are rare in elementary school singing. There are usually enough boys to carry this part nicely. Frequently your best sight-readers may be the rare girls of whom we have spoken.

If the boys' voices in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades find difficulty in singing the range that is common to the natural girl alto, they should be put on the part suggested for (D). The voice as it changes is getting thicker and less brilliant in character. Likewise, it becomes increasingly more difficult to get effective singing from them. It will require unusual ingenuity on the part of the teacher. Careful selection of song material will help. The boys now want many songs.

IV. Boys, Altos and Tenors
Boys, Girls and Men

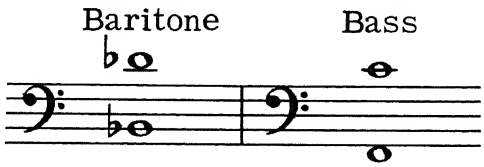
(D)



The boy whose voice is neither changed nor unchanged, but in the process of change, will often be capable of producing easily only about five or six tones, hovering around middle c′. If the vocal parts are carefully written to remain in this region, no harmful results will accrue. The teacher in testing the voices should tell the boys within what limits they should sing. If a tenor part is scored beyond his range, he stops singing whenever he comes to those notes. It must be understood that all boys may not become alto-tenors; voices vary widely.

V. Baritones and Basses
Boys and Men

(E)



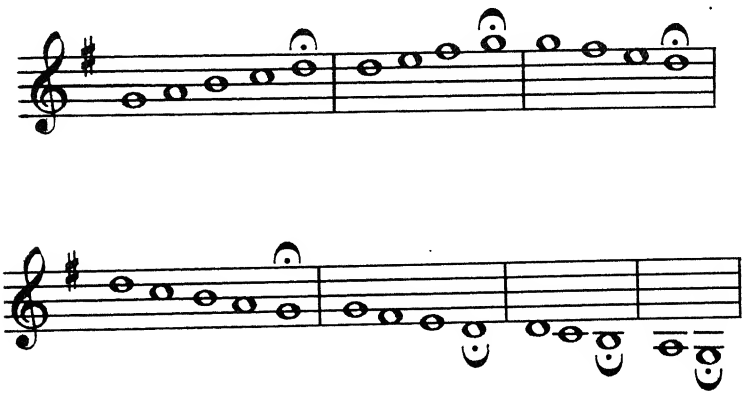
The bass range here indicated covers a little over an octave and does not call for tones at the bottom of the bass staff. Many boys will sing lower, but there is a growing tendency on the part of writers of children's music to limit the range of every part so as to provide a comfortable singing compass for all voices. It is not assumed that all the basses will have the same range. In (E) the extremes are indicated. It is again urged that the teacher tell the boys within what range they are to sing.

Whether voices are in a state of flux or in a static physiological condition, there are many good exercises which may be employed for vocal improvement. Among the devices employed for testing, the following are quite worthwhile:

1. Have pitch g′ sounded on the piano or pitch-pipe. Ask all students in the class to sing Do. Ask all to sing do, re, mi, fa, so, up the scale very slowly. The teacher walks around the room listening to the various voices attempting to detect any of those children having trouble with singing the various pitches intoned. Those who are having difficulty should be asked to stop singing temporarily while the teacher listens to the remaining students. Any of those who found trouble singing up to high *sol* and *do* should be tried again and again until the teacher is certain which part they are to sing. After singing

the high *Do,* all children reverse the procedure by singing down the scale—do, ti, la, sol, fa, etc.—the teacher going about the room doing the same thing as previously suggested. The pupils can keep the pitch going at all times by having them sustain the pitch, taking breaths as they are needed.

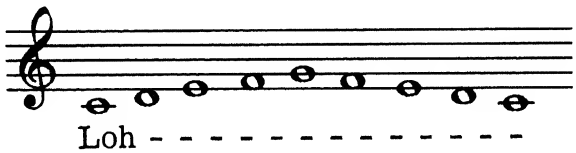
ILLUSTRATION



The notes have no relationship to measures. Have the children pause wherever the bar line appears. They can be required to sing up and down the scale more than once.

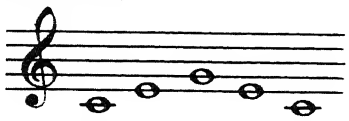
In the above exercise there are usually six or seven tones up or down that the student is capable of singing with comparative ease. It is important that the *manner* of tone production should guide the teacher in selecting the voice. The exercise above is for treble voices. A great deal can be detected by listening to the speaking voice. While testing voices, listen to the child's singing and speaking voice. When the boys sing they may want to sing lower than they should resulting in a forcing of the tone. When they speak they may forget the idea.

Another method commonly used for testing voices in junior and senior high school choral work is as follows: Beginning at middle c′, have the children vocalize an open vowel syllable as *lah, mah, yah, no, low, moh,* etc., up the scale by five successive steps. The following exercise is continued by half steps until the teacher is satisfied that the child has reached the optimum of effective singing.



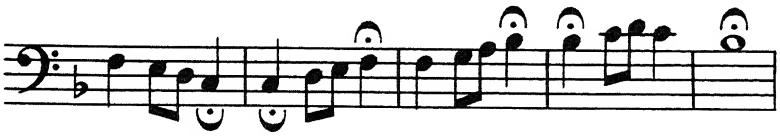
The syllable *LOH* is articulated but once during the singing of each group of five tones up and then down, beginning at any given pitch; C′ is however suggested for the starting note. The next set would begin on D′-flat, and proceed up to A′-flat and back down to D′-flat.

The exercise 1, 3, 5, 3, 1 (Do, mi, sol, mi, Do) is not recommended because it proves to be very difficult in the upper reaches of the voice. It is, however, suggested that upon occasion the above 1, 3, 5, 3, 1 technique may be used if the voice is very flexible and has a wide range. In the lower part of the singing register it could be used to speed up the testing procedure, but resort to the first two methods for upper range singing.

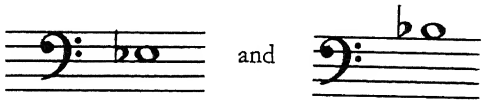


Lah - - - - - -

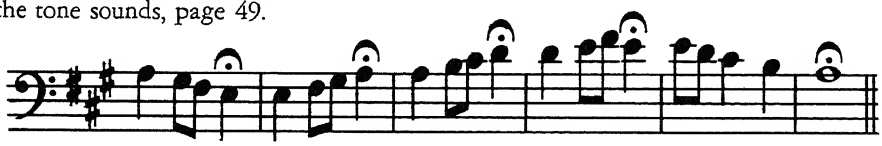
Exercise for Bass Voices. Any of the three previously mentioned exercises may be used, or the following one may be used. If either the depth or the breaking of the tone is apparent, it signifies that mutation is taking place from boyhood to manhood. The following exercise starts in the middle of a short ranged bass voice. Wherever the fermata is indicated, a point of rest is observed giving the child and teacher an opportunity to take stock of the quality and singing effectiveness of the voice at that point. The exercises should be done at about 70 quarter notes per minute. As the few tones of the above exercise are intoned, the teacher will decide whether to continue the test on higher or lower tones.



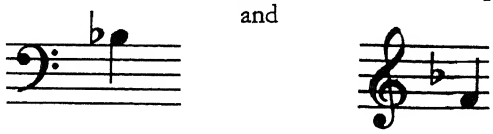
If Exercise is too low, the following may be tried. It should be understood that any beginning pitch between



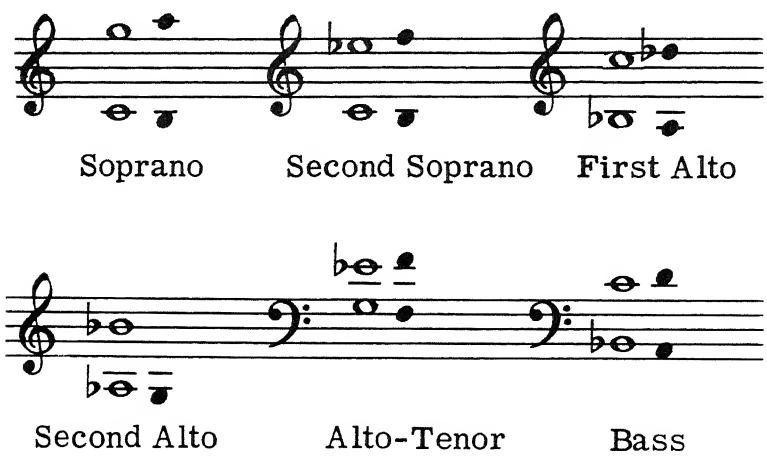
may be used for the starting note. Breaths may be taken at the fermata signs, if the exercise is taken at too slow a tempo. The important feature of this simple exercise is that the teacher should listen discriminatively for the way the bore of the tone sounds, page 49.



Exercise for Alto-Tenor Voices. The exercise would be the same as the Exercise for Bass Voice, but the starting note would vary with the voice in question. It might begin between



Ranges of Elementary and Junior High School Voices. In attempting to classify children's voices, for that is what they are until they become mature, no set voice range is possible. Voices are selected first on the basis of quality (temporary) and then upon the extent of their ranges (always in a state of flux). The various range suggestions indicated show the general range and the smaller note allows for the generally accepted exceptions.



Judging Quality. Every human voice that we listen to has an inherent breadth, depth, heft, or bore of tone. It is generally called timbre. The best way to determine voice quality is by listening to voices. The ensuing suggestions should give the student a clearer concept of voice differences.

All voices have a definite bore. The shotgun is divided into many bore classifications, indicating various sizes. There is a 410 gauge, twenty (20), sixteen (16), twelve (12), and a ten gauge (10) gun. The size of the bore determines the thickness or the diameter of the shell and gun barrel used. Each human voice has a bore-heft of tone. Though no two voices are alike, they may be classified almost comparably with the gun bore idea.

BORE (Relative)

Gun Gauge | *Voice Gauge*

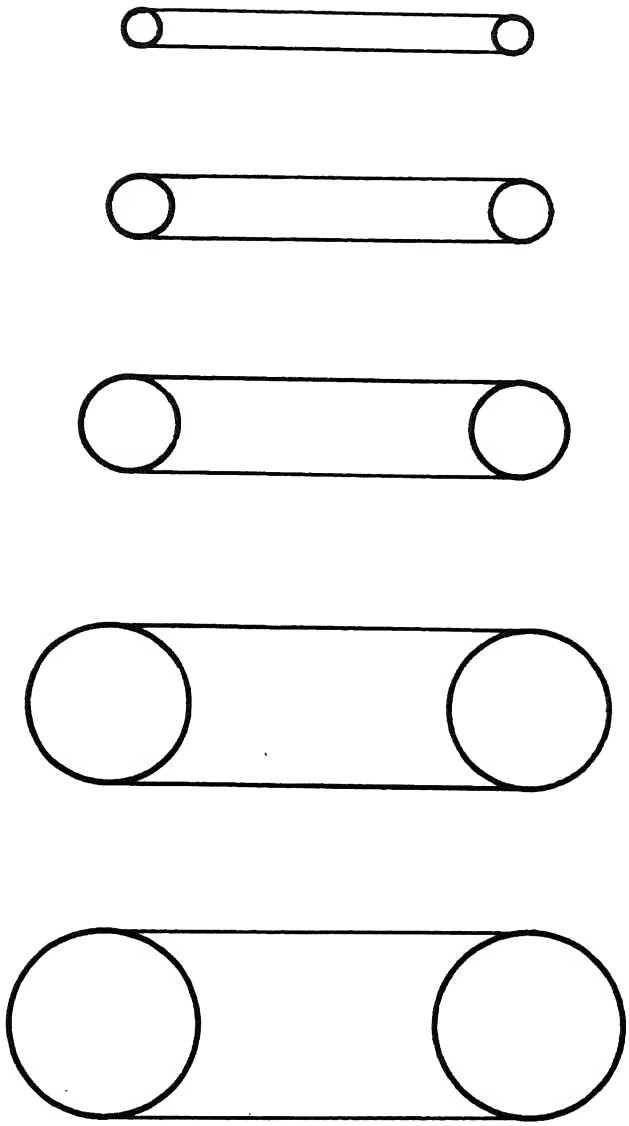
410 — Soprano

20 — Contralto

16 — Tenor

12 — Baritone

10 — Basso
Basso-Profundo



Though guns remain the same in size, the human voice is again re-classified within the major classifications which have been suggested. The number of type of voices partially indicates the problems involved.

S.B.-154

THE ADULT VOICE

Sopranos. The sopranos should all be capable of singing approximately the range of the high or first sopranos. It is a good practice to use the lyrical voices for the highest part, placing the dramatic and mezzos on the second part. Sopranos of very limited range should be assigned to the first alto division. This procedure will immeasurably aid intonation. The sopranos will be able to do better interval work in the upper reaches of their voices. Voices should be designated for parts which will best aid them in singing tones of good quality for long periods of time. Ease of tone production is a basic factor in securing such an objective.

Altos. These singers should be required to sing a firm tone on d″, fourth line of the treble staff. Those of the group who are able to sing f, (preferably e), below middle c′, are called second altos. All short ranged sopranos can be assigned to the first alto division. A voice will always thin out after sustained singing, consequently these ranges are imperative in producing accurate intonation for SSAA or SSAATTBB music. It must be remembered that as the vocal cords' muscular energy is expended in the singing process, its muscular tonus is vitiated; continued singing with satisfactory pitch is impossible until further energy is stored-up in the muscles about the larynx and in the vocal cords themselves. The suggested method of assigning voices permits the second altos to produce tones of good quality without undue forcing; such a technique prevents overblowing of the tone. Any unnecessary forcing produces a false voice quality. False tones result from the impediment of natural overtones which are the natural inheritance of every voice. This deprives the voice of its natural beauty.

When a voice is required to sing beyond its comfortable singing range it becomes strident, impure in pitch, poor in quality, and lacking in facile agility. It is positively amazing the acceptable performances that are occasionally obtained with almost total ignorance of some of these fundamental voice testing and classification considerations. It is hoped that the challenge of these statements will go far to further the development of more reliably effective choral singing techniques.

Men's Voices. With changed male voices it is a good plan to expect the first tenors to sing a free a′ in the tenor staff. The second tenors should be able to produce f′ in the tenor staff. The person who said: "Society is divided into men, women, and tenors," was not speaking a half truth. Tenors are scarce and mature ones are rarely found in a secondary school. If a person has an abundance of alto women singers, he may develop some of the exceedingly low alto singers for the tenor parts. These people sing the tenor part an octave lower than written (if treble staff is used). This technique will help to fill in the harmonization. This makeshift arrangement is not entirely satisfactory. Though the harmonization of a composition is aided, there is great sacrifice of quality, and even impaired intonation.

With the basses it is a good practice to use those who can sing a well supported e′ (second line above the bass staff). They should be able to produce a firm G (first line on the bass staff). The second or lowest bass singers should be be able to produce a low E (first line below the bass staff). The voice of the mature male singer will thin out like female voices over long periods of sustained singing. It is possible to thin out the quality and alter the range of a singing voice. Notes may be added to the upper range of these voices, but it very frequently

sacrifies the lower part of the singer's register. It is most important to thoroughly discern just exactly what type of quality a given voice has and then assign its possessor to a specific singing range; one which is conducive to the singing of tones of good quality.

Principle Voice Classifications.

I. Soprano
- Coloratura
- Lyric
- Dramatic
- Choir
- Mezzo

II. Contralto
- Mezzo
- Dramatic
- Choir
- Lyric Dramatic

III. Tenor
- Lyric
- Dramatic-Heroic
- Tenor

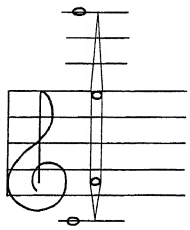
IV. Baritone
- Lyric
- Dramatic
- Baritone

V. Bass
- Bass-Baritone
  - (Bass-Cantante)
- Basso—Singing Bass
- Basso—Profundo

These classifications would still allow for many modifications. There are many gradations in each division. The important thing is that of determining the voice first on the basis of quality and then range. Excess range may ruin a voice if improperly classified. A baritone may sing as low as a bass, yet he has no right to sing repertoire for the bass voice. A tenor may sing as low as a bass, (Enrico Caruso is an outstanding example), yet he should remain a tenor. Pictorially what happens to the bore of the voice in singing is portrayed in the following discussions:

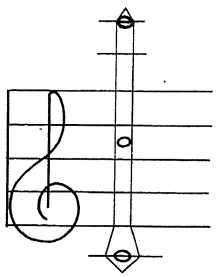
I. Coloratura Soprano. This voice has a very wide range which extends from f′ to f‴. The middle of the voice is approximately f″. As the singer ascends from the bottom to the top of her voice there is a characteristic tonal bore. Throughout the center of the voice the bore remains somewhat constant. That is, the timbre (quality) or heft is similar. As the voice reaches the uppermost and the lower part of the voice, the bore tapers to a finer tapering of the voice's inherent bore. For the remaining voices the discussion regarding the bore and its change is applicable except for adjustment to difference in range.

Coloratura Soprano
(I)



II. Lyric Soprano. The range is approximately the same as that of the coloratura excepting that the upper range may in some cases be not as great. Principle differences are of temperament and not voice. The more dynamic extrovertive personality with probably more rapid muscular reflexes is characteristic of the coloratura soprano. The lyric soprano sings in a lyrical style. (No illustration for II.)

Dramatic Soprano
(III)

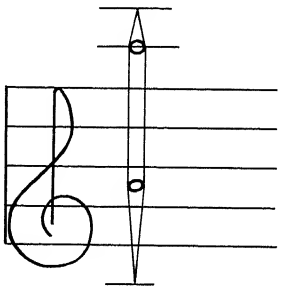


Note: The breadth of (III) is greater than in (I); however, the upper taper is more rapid in point of diminishing range, but the lower taper is more extended. The ends of each taper are the point beyond which the singer cannot sing. The broadened base indicates a tendency toward heavier timbre.

This singer sings in a dramatic manner. The voice is suitable for dramatic vocal rendition.

IV. Soprano. This word is used here to describe the voice that does not fit either of the other descriptions. In the case of the concert singer the range is approximately that of the *Dramatic Soprano.* The word *Soprano* is more often used to describe the lay soprano, the church choir, or chorus singer. Their voices fall into the following approximate range.

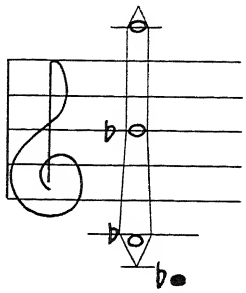
Soprano
(IV)



The bore is not that of the dramatic soprano, but its tapers are very similar.

V. Mezzo-Soprano. This voice does not have the range of the wider range soprano, but it has sufficient range to sing most soprano solos. Its virtue is the heaviness of its timbre. In church choirs or quartets the commonly called contralto soloist is but a short ranged mezzo-soprano. Pictorially this voice is thus:

Mezzo-Soprano
(V)



Note: The large notes are those most reliable for good production.
The widening of the skirt of the bore at the bottom indicates the increasing heft of the voice in its downward descent. The broadened base is typical of the heavier quality.

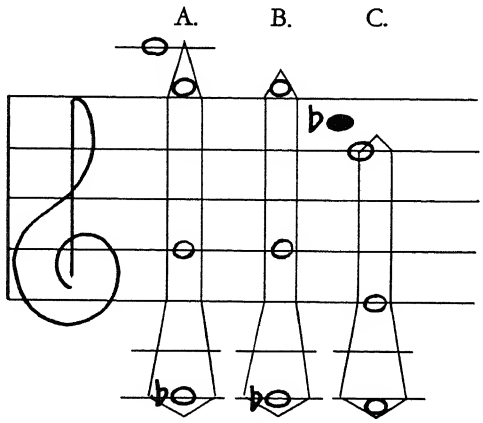
VI. Mezzo-Contralto, Dramatic Contralto, and Contralto. A discussion of these three vocal divisions is similar to the discussion of the sopranos with the following exceptions.

A. *Mezzo-Contralto.* Is a light quality contralto. The voice may be of good range. (See Illustration)

B. *Dramatic Contralto.* A voice of good range and one that is used in a dramatic manner.

C. *Contralto.* Ordinary voice with no traits for special classification. Church singers belong to this group.

(VI)



It is to be noted that as these voices reach their middle and from there to the bottom, the timbre broadens and the taper is abrupt. The quality widens to a maximum area, then it shuts off very soon. The apex of each diagram indicates the tapering bore.

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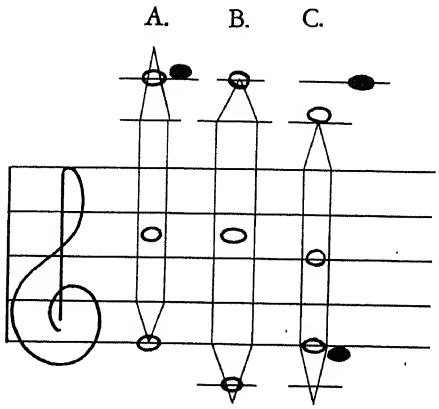
VII. Lyric Tenor, Dramatic Tenor (Heroic), and Tenor.

A. *Lyric.* The high male voices are divided into three divisions indicated. The lyric tenor is comparable to the lyric soprano. It has an extended range; it is small bored in tone quality.

B. *The Dramatic Tenor.* Is a heavily bored tenor voice. The singer sings in a dramatic style because he is temperamentally and vocally equipped for such singing. The voice does not usually have the range of the lyric voice, but has the common ability of singing a good lower tone.

C. *Tenor.* This term is most frequently applied to high male voices. Included in this group are the church singers.

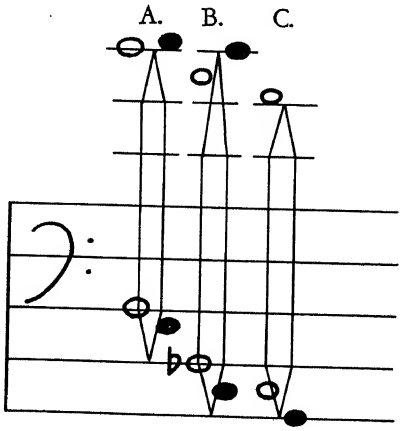
(VII)



Note: Notice the difference in the gradualness and the abruptness of the upper and lower tapers.

VIII. Lyric Baritone, Dramatic Baritone, and Baritone. What has been said of the comparable type names for the tenors is applicable to the baritones.

(VIII)



Note: Small notes represent range sometimes employed.

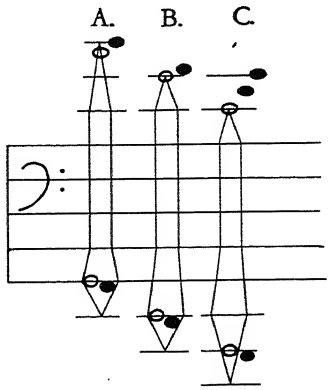
IX. Bass Baritone, Basso, and Basso-Profundo.

A. *Bass Baritone.* This is a voice having a bass quality in the lower register, but baritone quality in the upper.

B. *Basso.* In a concert bass. He has the range to sing songs which are quite low and yet reasonably high.

C. *Basso Profundo.* Is distinctly an ensemble singer. If his range permits, he may sing certain solos. The Russian people have been noted for their excellent low basses.

(IX)



Note: In the basso profundo division there have been singers who could sing a comparatively musical low A′. The original Don Cossack Choir has some. They are distinctly unusual, and are cherished by choral directors when they are available.

The very light, high, and flexible tenor, the concert bass, and basso profundos are very rare. Men with these voices are in great demand. Such is likewise true of the contralto.

Chapter V

THE CONDUCTOR AT WORK

Conductoral Requisites. The writer is quite certain that there is general disagreement upon the amount of musicianship possessed by many choral conductors; they are not the musicians nor do they as a group possess the musicianship that do the instrumentalists. This is as it should be anticipated. People who direct choral groups have in many cases gravitated to their chosen vocation because they were interested in singing, took a few vocal lessons (in many cases) and later through force of personality and industry were called upon to direct some choral group. The conductor of an instrumental group must have a skill that is only acquired after years of practice. This discussion makes no pretense to cover the musicianship qualifications required for professional orchestral directing. However, it is common observation that conductors of these groups are highly trained in some realm of instrumental perfection. It is rare to find a vocalist as director of one of our major symphony orchestras; the reverse is more common.

It is likewise common knowledge that our choral conductors are increasingly receiving more instrumental background in teacher-education courses; the piano requirement exacted in our major music departments is convincing evidence of this fact. This is as it should be. To be a singer is not enough. The choral director must be a thoroughly trained musician. Singing and an understanding of and familiarity with vocal literature are only a part of the ultimate requirement.

The consummate musician is the thoroughly schooled musician. You may ask: "What should he have in his equipment to become such a person?" This requirement is divided into two major categories; on the one hand he must be trained thoroughly in the vocal arts, while at the same time have relative mastery over some instrument with particular emphasis upon training in piano. To argue to the contrary is pure folly. The man who has been trained vocally without the benefit of such instrumental training would better appreciate the significance of this statement if he were required to master the technical information required in the first five years of assiduous piano study. Vocal training is not enough; it must be backed by training which demands technical musicianship.

Beyond the demands of good musicianship are the requirements which can all be impounded in the phrase "personal magnetism." First the person must have the knowledge—the know how; then he must be able to impart his *know how* to countless numbers of personalities who will be under his direction throughout his professional career. The personality complex involved in a group of from forty to a hundred or more singers is at times overwhelming, but it must be understood that the conductor is a leader of men and women and it is up to him to get them to perform in a musicianly fashion using the techniques which he has acquired through training. A conductor is constantly pursuing an idealism which culminates only in the actions of others.

Temper versus Musicianship versus Leadership. It is quite palpable that there is no room for temperamental displays in a training chorus situation. A mind that has lost control of itself to the point that objectivity has ceased is certainly not the kind of mind to control those people who are supposedly reacting normally to any given situation. It is unquestionably true that there are many occasions during the course of a year's rehearsing of any chorus when both the personality and disciplinary situations give the conductor many trying moments. The successful conductor must be the epitome of diplomacy. In dealing with volunteer choral groups success beyond musicianship is somewhat proportionate to the success a person has in dealing with the personnel of his organizations. Controlled temperament, backed by consummate musicianship, will result in a type of leadership which will immeasurably improve the effectiveness of any choral director's efforts. The director who has the leadership to so plan his rehearsals that every moment of the rehearsal is one of singing instead of opportunity for dawdling will find that there will be little time for temperament to display itself.

Knowledge of Style. This is one of the most vulnerable spots in the average musician's armor. Becoming a good choral conductor requires sensitivity for style of interpretation. This implies an understanding of tempo, structure of music, dynamics, emotional intent, and whether the composition is instrumental or vocal in nature. Very frequently we say that the rendition was not stylistic. This implies that the performer was not thoroughly conscious of the basic implications impounded into the factors already indicated.

It is common knowledge among musicians of reputable standing that frequently an evaluation of a performer is made in the following generalized manner: "That chap plays a lot of notes, but as yet he does not understand what the music is all about." This innocent comment has great implied ramifications.

As this book is concerned with the choral conductor, all references will be made to the student of voice. It is not just a question of *taking a few voice lessons,* and then launching upon a vocal career. It is the writer's deep conviction that by-and-large the good singer makes, generally speaking, the better choral conductor or voice teacher. In the first place how can a person require beautiful tone production unless he himself is able to produce one? How can he have a sensitivity or *feeling for* the style of the period of Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Grieg, Brahms, Wolf, or Richard Strauss unless he has had *abundant* experience in singing music typical of these men and the period of composition they represent?

The student of choral conducting must *know* the music of the classical, romantic, or modern periods if he is to become completely sensitized to the spirit of the era which each represents. Just as literature breathes an atmosphere representative of a certain age or time in the development of language and prose, music, too, has its ontogeny. One of the common observations of the adjudicator is this immaturity of the poorly grounded musician; immaturity because the performance indicates the limited scope of his understanding in handling the interpretation of the composition. Jazz interpretation has its place in the developmental maturity of America's music. Likewise, sincere artistic interpretations of a master's work must indicate an understanding of such music.

The Well-Balanced Program. The secret to program building is certainly not beyond the ken of human understanding. Good programs do not just happen. They are intelligently planned. An interesting listening experience may contain contrasting keys, moods, and literature for both lay and professional musician interest; soloists may be used; assisting artists may add interest to any program; echo choir effects, and good programatic notes may be employed. These and many other innovations may be tried.

Programs will be much more interesting if compositions reflect the various emotions experienced by man as he experiences them in daily living. Living situations are not all joyous ones. Some are sad; then, too, some are cloaked in high idealisms while others deal with the more mundane and even tawdry acts of men. For general lay listening it is obvious that all these emotions cannot be suffused into one program. But it is palpable that a variety of human expression will make for interest. It is possible to build programs where there is audience participation. Programs must be evaluated as to the purpose they are to serve.

Of interest to all choral organizations is the type of music which they will be required to sing. A choral director must be both idealistic and practical in the selection of music. In a world where practical and ordinary human beings move and have their being the artistic director with high idealisms is always confronted with realistic situations. Society cannot be educated musically overnight. Illiteracy and man's inhumanity to man is concrete evidence of this fact. The important factor in this whole discussion is that progress is being made.

In carrying choral singing to the masses directors must reach the greatest numbers possible within their ability. They must attract people; the art of choral singing must be sold upon an enjoyment basis. The amount of quality which may be brought to the laity is dependent upon two factors. They are: the ability of the director to transmit through his ability and personality the beauty of choral music and the selection of material that is gauged to the public's level of appreciation. It is the combination of these two factors that in large part is responsible for creating a love for music.

Building Programs and Selecting Material. Choral programs are no easier to build than programs for vocal recital purposes. The conductor must keep uppermost in his mind the following facts regarding the singers under his direction:

I. The vocal material at his command.
   a. The range of the individual voices within voice parts—the maximum comfortable singing range of the individual sections.
   b. The potential quality of the various voice parts.
   c. The tonal peculiarities of his group.
   d. The solo material available for solo sections of given choral numbers.
   e. The demanded agility of the various numbers to be sung in relation to the training and experience of his group.

II. The tonality as manifested by a group or series of compositions.
   a. Is there key change from one number to another?
   b. Is there key predominance in given groups or series of groups?

III. Are the compositions to be performed arrayed in an interesting manner rhythmically?
   a. Compositions can have rhythmic interest for the musicians or for those for whom the music is being performed.

b. Is it possible that the music may be rhythmically too technical for the group?

IV. Are the songs within groups properly balanced as to:
   a. Variety of tonality.
   b. Variety of time signature.
   c. Variety of tempo.
   d. Variety of type or subject.
   e. Variety of mood.
   f. Variety of dynamic potentialities.

V. Do the songs have definite musical value?
   a. Is the literature worthwhile?
   b. Do they keep the common touch, yet carry the listener a little beyond his present state of development in order that music education march forward?

VI. Do the songs give variety as to styles of technique?
   a. Are there songs which are principally dramatic, dictional, bel canto, folk-songish, declamatory, or humorous in character?

VII. Are the groups as units within themselves properly balanced with each other?
   a. Is there a group devoted to either light, heavy, parlando, classical, romantic, German lieder, French, Italian, folk-song, or bel canto songs?
   b. Are some groups devoted to excerpts from oratorio, grand opera, or light opera?

Analyzation of Songs. In building programs the artist-conductor should give consideration to the basic harmonic structural features of songs. The first consideration is the audience. It is they who are paying for the concert. Music is for people —not for the artist alone. This does not necessarily mean that the singer has to *sing down* to his audience. The area of choral or song literature is so complete that it is possible to build a program that will be attractive to all tastes including the singer's own muscianship. Once it is generally agreed upon what kind of literature must be chosen, the singer or conductor can proceed to analyze the material he intends to use for program purposes.

Learning the Song. The conductor or vocalist must determine what the purpose of his song may be. Why was it written? The song must be typed in order that the musician can properly determine its true place in a program. The rhythmic problems must also be thoroughly studied in order that the conductor may discern whether the composition under consideration is fundamentally rhythmic, melodic, or harmonic. This writer has always felt that memorization of any composition is imperative—especially true if intelligent interpretation is desired. Only through complete mental freedom which comes from absolute familiarity with the text is the conductor able to lose himself in the musical aspects of interpretation. It is obvious that to know a song a person must know it thoroughly; memorization of text as well as its harmonic structure, rhythmic problems, phrase-wise structure, and general interpretational marks is imperative.

The Art of Giving Criticism. There is an art in knowing how to give positive constructive criticism. Many people are geared for negativisms. All they know how to do is to preface their comments by such phrases as: "Now I know you don't understand how this should be done," "Why don't you tenors sing in tune?" "I

don't like your tone quality," and so on ad infinitum. You will observe that in these statements the negative precedes the statement of fact. This just does not seem to be an efficient and effctive manner of addressing people. The approach should be couched in positive terminology.

What Is the Correct or More Effective Approach? A conductor has a monumental job. Not alone must he be a superb musician, but he must be a psychologist of first magnitude. Many music educators have failed not because they did not know their music, but because of their inability to recognize that they were handling human personalities.

In order to avoid the domineering type of questions already suggested in this section, it would seem better to address criticism in the positive manner. It seems better to say, "I suggest that by using this device you will be able to get more satisfactory results;" "Tenors, you are trying very hard, but your intonation on that pitch is in need of considerable reinforcement from the breath;" and the disciplinary problems can be handled more effectively by pointing out to the group the necessity of cooperating in a cooperative enterprise.

Every person's time is valuable. He belongs to the organization for the purpose of deriving some musical and social benefits. Whenever the group is singing everyone should have the opportunity to benefit alike. When the moments of relaxation arrive every person should participate alike. Blanket reprimands are absolutely worthless, due to the fact that but a limited few are concerned. The whole method is deleterious to the morale of the group.

Enthusiasm. To become successful the choral director must be an enthusiastic missionary of his chosen art. He must recognize the fact that his lay singers (for most of them are that), will not in all probability possess his sensitivity for musical expression. It is certain that they will not possess his power for emotional expression. It is the director's job to get them to emote.

To transmit his idealisms he must secure a musical result through his abundance of transmitted enthusiasm for man himself and he must fulfill his mission as a musician. Choral singing is different from instrumental playing. In the former we are dealing with the human instrument. It is responsive to a state of physiological rapport. The condition of the mind and body determine how well the singing mechanism will perform. It is the conductor's job to establish possible conditions for its functioning. To a certain degree this is true of the instrumental performer, yet his instrument can always be put in a good working order. It must be emphasized that choral work requires *human* beings and they must have *humane* treatment.

Success. Success in choral work is possible, but only so if everlasting vigilance is maintained regarding the individual factors we have discussed. It has been the writer's experience that those individuals who attain success in choral conducting do so because they have paid attention to minute details. All details must be religiously reviewed and constantly so.

Many people know quite well what we are discussing in this book. But their success is measured by the constancy with which they demand perfection in the performances of their choristers. The old adage, "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," is applicable at this point. Roughly speaking all choirs are capable of producing choral tone only in proportion to the vocal endowment of the singers. It is, however, amazing the rather superb singing that the tonally average group

can produce. A group of singers under the leadership of inspired muscianship can perform artistic miracles.

Perseverance Toward Vocal Idealims. The choral conductor must always pursue perfection. The challenge of all the arts is that they demand absolute devotion of the creator to perfection of detail. Perfection in music is never attained. It is something always sought but never reached.

The fountain-head of good choral technique is naturally the conductor. He must be by nature a perfectionist. The reason for so many conductors obtaining rather indifferent results is the fact that they gloss over the fundamentals of musicianship. They know what should be done but possess one great lack—that being the everlasting insistence upon expecting every singer to produce the very best musical result of which he is capable. Perfection is always exacted at a great price.

Intonation, interpretation, phrase-line, rhythm, and other phases of musical performance techniques must be minutely and ever-lastingly sought by the director of the choir. A conductor must be detail minded. He cannot afford to insist upon certain idealistic features of performance for the brief period of one or two rehearsals. He must insist that the collective mass intelligence before him must function as a synchronized, intellectual entity determined to pursue perfection every time musical performance is attempted.

Humor, Tolerance, and Discipline. The road to good choral singing is long and tortuous. Many indescribably unusual personality situations may arise. A conductor, dealing with a large group of singers for three rehearsal periods a week and scheduled for an entire school year, is bound to be taxed both emotionally and physically.

The conductor being the leader of the group is not alone responsible for the quality of its musical performance, but he must be ever on guard to maintain a happy rehearsal atmosphere for the group. Whether or not the individuals may be in error, it is imperative the leader take a positive instead of a negative point of view in handling any situation. Be positive from the first rehearsal.

There are many opportunities for humor and tolerance to be found in any rehearsal situation. It would seem worthwhile to accept the philosophy that the individual is more important than the music. There are times when a boy or girl member may have fine musicality yet through immaturity or for some other psychological reason the student in question acts intolerantly of others. It is very possible to educate this individual during the rehearsal time through discipline which comes from the group instead of the conductor. Through a humorous situation the conductor may indirectly handle the recalcitrant individual. Fundamentally, youth is responsive to the logic of any situation when he learns that group discipline is necessary to obtain certain desired objectives.

The conductor should never fall into the error of showing favoritism. In selecting soloists, his adjudication of an individual's performance must be evaluated solely on a merit basis. Nagging a chorus never has produced results. Nothing is so disgusting to a group of people as is an argumentative situation. Much trouble can be avoided by strong leadership—musicianly leadership. A choral rehearsal is a place where music reigns supreme. Generally speaking, if music is taught—taught vigorously for the entire rehearsal period, there will be little time for discussion of other than musical matters.

Self-Evaluation versus Self-Praise. One of the most unfortunate exhibitions is the excursion into the realm of self-praise. It has never been the author's experience that any group is interested in hearing how wonderful it is. It would seem that the better approach would be to establish high artistic standards and then by a more subtle means indicate your satisfaction. An attitude of pleasure or a passing comment upon the execution of some phrase well sung by some section will be sufficient. It is far better to let them understand that an ideal is to be attained. In public performances likewise, let the commendations come from friends of the choristers. That, in the final analysis, is their most satisfying reward. Remember, the choir rehearsal is a place where singing experiences take place; talking is of little value.

Ability to Impart Knowledge. To the imaginative, beginning choral conductor the following questions are always paramount. What is it that distinguishes one choral conductor from another? Why is it that there are those who have had comparatively good technical training, yet find themselves faltering in the process of producing good choral work?

No one questions the importance of the choral director being adequately trained for leadership. But still more important is the ability of the individual to exercise, to impart, and to effect good results. Leadership transcends all passive action—it goes beyond the mere acquirement of information—it is only worthy of such an appellation when it finds its expression in active processes.

Choral conductors must know how to transmit an easily understandable technique of acquiring in the shortest possible time a musicianly method for effecting good singing. An inspired leader never accepts a "lesser standard." Even though the group which he is leading may be limited in native ability, yet the conductor and the choristers must be constantly challenged to produce good results. Most conductors fail to demand meritorious effort. This differs from meritorious achievement. Achievements are commensurate with inherent ability.

The Batonless Conductor. There is no quarrel with the choral conductor who used only his hands for the purpose of conducting. Especially is this true where the group *learns* for public performance the compositions under a given conductor's rehearsing. Such an arrangement provides for a thoroughness of technical mastery such as is rarely accomplished when but two or three rehearsals are provided. If the baton is an extension of the conductor's personality—as it should be—then for many people who are required to produce performances with but a limited number of rehearsals, the baton would be more effective in delineating interpretive information. Then, too, a great deal depends upon the individual personality. With the use of a baton or the hands, it certainly is possible to delineate the movements in a quiet fashion. Some conductors are not too graceful with a baton in their hands. However, by using their hands (though they may not be any more graceful), it is highly probable that their awkward movements would be less obtrusive.

Mirror Practice. Very few conductors have had the privilege of seeing themselves as others do. Many vocal teachers require their students to practice before a full length mirror. This is an excellent suggestion for the beginning and advanced conductor. It is amazing the little idiosyncrasies which creep into conductoral techniques during the process of performing metronomic and interpretive duties. The mirror will suggest indefiniteness of beat, peculiarities of beat outline, confusion between metronomic and interpretive arm movements, distracting manner-

isms, and other movements which will tend to confuse musicians in following the conductor.

The Baton. A baton is a projection of an individual's personality. From the manner in which the *stick* is handled it is possible to determine the musician or the *time beater.* The personality holding the baton is a recreator of musical art. The baton must be a delineation of musical sensitivity or else it should not be used at all.

Whether or not the baton is used matters little. One reservation is made with respect to large choral organizations. In general choral groups of twenty-four or more voices would always appear appropriately conducted if a baton is used. I do not mean to imply that not to use the baton is detrimental. But certainly small ensembles look rather over-shadowed and over-powered by a conductor with a *stick.*

The baton is a medium for expressing aesthetic eloquence. The hand that holds the foil is essentially metronomic, yet it is interpretive instead of arithmetical in its purpose. By holding and coursing the air with the foil, the hand not using the baton does a yeoman job of interpretation.

The Baton at Work. In selecting a foil the conductor should choose one somewhere between eighteen and twenty-three inches in length. The median of these two lengths should fit into the personality expressional requirements of most conductors. Beyond the maximum length indicated a swish or backlash will occur in vigorous movements. Batons of extreme lengths become obtrusive to the auditor's eye. Plain batons, or those that are cork-tipped with a cone-like ball shaped handle are certainly comfortable. Balance in construction of batons is a very important factor and no effort should be spared in attempting to secure such a foil.

The Use of the Baton Hand. Among the many functions of the baton hand are the following:

1. It delineates the metronomic pulsations of time.
2. It is used for getting attention by assuming a preparatory position before singing actually takes place.
3. It is used to give dynamic shadings of all degrees. This is done by increasing or decreasing the extensity of the stroke.
4. By increasing or decreasing the rapidity with which the baton travels, it is possible to discern and indicate tempo changes.
5. It serves to indicate musical slurs, staccatos, ponderous or light tones, cue giving or starting tones, and releases.
6. Slurs may be indicated by small or larger gliding movements; the staccatos by short, snappy strokes; the ponderous by broad, double, pesante movements; the light tones by a proportionately lightly held baton with graceful movements; the starting cues by an inverted check and the cut-off cue by an ordinary check stroke.

The Use of the Left Hand. This hand is used fundamentally for interpretive purposes. Some of its more definite assignments are:

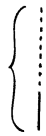
1. It gives starting cues. For large groups it is generally customary to use both arms in starting cues. This is also for the purpose of getting attention from the choristers.
2. It is a great aid for introducing parts, tempo, dynamics, refined gradations of nuances; also deleting parts, *cueing* in soloists, indicating melodic progressions, preparing singers for part entries; in general, it is the inter-

pretive work-horse of conducting. It may even be temporarily metronomic in character—especially is this true when sudden changes in tempi are necessary and the additional delineations made by the left hand or arm aid in conveying such information to the singer's attention.

Conductoral Diagrams. To give fundamental directions to the movement of the foil is the purpose of the following discussion. As the student or director becomes proficient in the art of using fundamental directions he makes variations of foil movements which coincide with his personality in musical interpretation. The fundamental direction devoid of flourishes is the important understanding for the beginner. This discussion deals with simple directions. The conductor must be able to convey ideas to his performers. Thus, all foil movements should be simple and purposeful.

The Fundamental or First Stroke. The tonal duration for the first stroke of either duple or triple metre is usually lost. The tonal value of the first beat is likewise vitiated.

(A) First Stroke



Tone only apparent during solid area of indicated stroke.

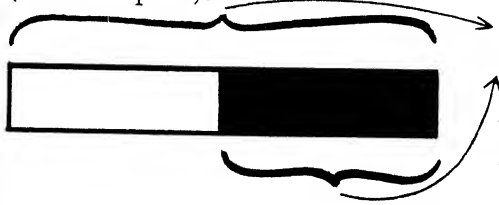
By closely observing conductors and critically listening to durational values it will be found that the following diagram is a more accurate representation.

(B) First Stroke

Tone should be produced during entire shaded area.

The tone actually begins with the start of the solid line. Naturally, it is more desirable and actually correct to produce a durational value as pictorially described below (horizontal plane).

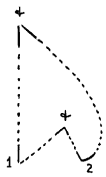
(C)



1 beat or 1 durational unit
Usual tone duration is indicated by the shaded area. The blank area represents tonal duration lost on first beat.

2/4 Metre

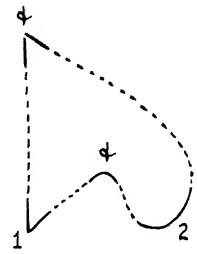
(D)



Excellent moderate tempo diagram for 2/4 metre. (D) Very usable for compositions such as "In The Gloaming." The broken line in every illustration indicates the entire area covered for a given tonal duration; the solid line indicates the beginning and end of the stroke. If the song is of a flowing melodic line the angularity of the strokes will be considerably rounded out. (E)

2/4 Metre

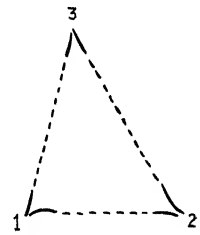
(E)



The first stroke or accentuated movement is usually the more angular one.

3/4 Metre

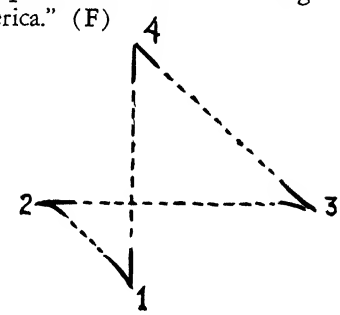
(F)



For moderate 3/4 tempo. Characteristic of straight-forward conducting of compositions such as "America." (F)

4/4 Metre

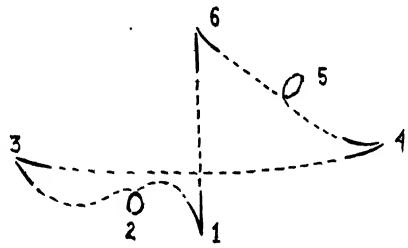
(G)



Suitable for conducting moderate tempo compositions such as "Holy! Holy! Holy!" (G)

6/8 Metre

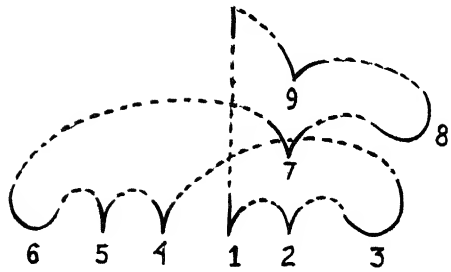
(H)



Excellent diagram for 6/8 metre. Use on such pieces as "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes." (H) Very fast 6/8 is conducted two strokes per measure.

9/8 Metre

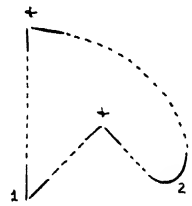
(I)



Rarely used. Frequently conducted as three strokes per measure.

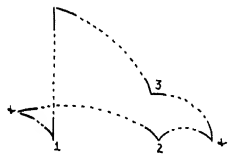
Divided Beats. There are occasions in slow tempo when the divided beat facilitates the ease with which the conductor is able to delineate individual note values. Slow songs make it difficult to maintain a flowing beat. Division of the beat makes this possible. The rebound is greater. (J)

(J)



The first beat must be accented. In divided beats the second half of a beat is roughly half of the whole stroke.

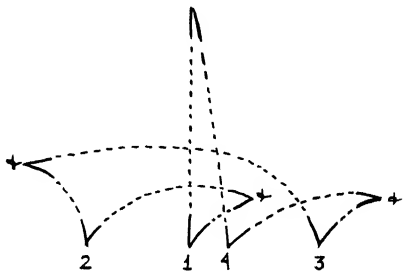
3/4 Metre



(K)

4/4 Metre

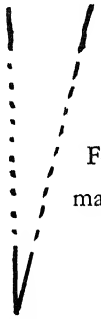
(L)



Conducting in Compound Metres.

2/4 Metre

(M)

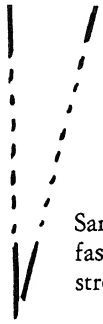


For fast or

march tempi

3/4 Metre

(N)



Same stroke delineation. For fast waltzes. One fundamental stroke per measure.

Counts and Accents for the Various Measures.

Legend: > equals accent

— equals unaccented

Counts to a Measure.

2 / 2

> —

3 / 2 3

> — —

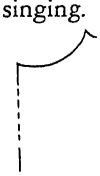
4 / 2 3 4

> — > —

2/4	(¢ =4/4)	6/8 fast	2/2
3/4	9/8 fast	3/2	3/8
4/4	12/8 fast	4/8	4/2

Preparatory Beat. This is commonly called the pig-tail or check mark indicating the beginning or breath sign preparatory to singing.

pig-tail
(slow)

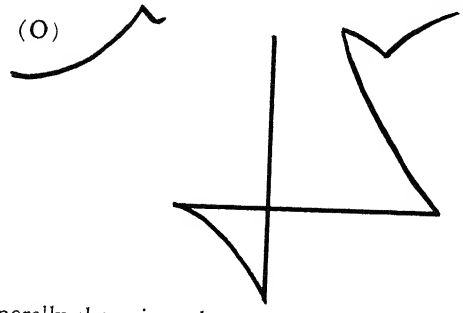


check
(faster)

When the composition begins on other than the first beat, the preparatory beat is the last half of the previous beat.

Cut-offs. The stroke used is the same as in the preparatory except it is reversed.

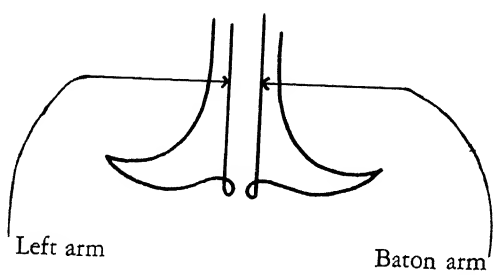
(O)



The heavy line is the cut-off. The faster the action the more angular the cut-off.

Generally there is a close correlation between the length of the baton stroke and the dynamics (volume) that are employed. Many times a conductor purposely broadens strokes for emphasizing a good legato tone. The writer witnessing a rehearsal by an internationally famous conductor, heard the comment made, "Broaden out your tone; play like a cello sings with good long tones." Upon making the comment the conductor employed both the broader movement of the baton arm, with a complementary action of the left arm. When both arms are used, the action must be contrary so as not to cause a collision of arm movements. It is an effective technique for many purposes. See Illustration (P)

(P)



It is useful for indicating to an accompanist sudden changes in tempo. It attracts the attention of large groups of singers to certain interpretive changes which must be noticed by the entire group. It is effective at the beginning and at the end of compositions for arresting attention. It is effective for conducting large groups because the more expansive arm movements by the two arms will help keep the singers together.

It must be understood that what one conductor finds convenient for expressing rhythm another will not. A great deal will depend upon the rhythmic sensitivity of the person doing the leading. *There is no fixed way.* The general principles, that is, the outlines are given; the other embellishments that may be added are just amplifications.

At this juncture it should prove worthy to include some of the more specialized details regarding the act of conducting.

1. The number of baton strokes per measure unit is determined by the tempo of the songs.
2. When we increase the volume of a song we likewise increase the length of the baton stroke. When we gradually decrease volume the opposite action takes place.

3. Whenever we beat staccato notes the baton movement becomes most angular or rigid, allowing for less and less grace of design in beating time.
4. What is called the broadened—legato—marks may be indicated thus:

The conductor may lengthen his baton movements with the right and left arm. The attempt is to give a full to over-flowing measure of value to each note.

5. Vigorous accents are sensed in big movements of the arm and not in little ones. In learning to conduct it is good to over-emphasize the accents. It will help to keep balance.
6. The right hand is the metronome—or the beater, if such a disparaging remark could be applied to it. The left hand does the interpretive work. *The left hand is not to be a metronome duplicator.*
7. Many times the tempo marking of a composition is confusing to the teacher. By referring to any metronome or musical dictionary, the speed of various tempo markings is easily found.

The Podium. It is a good practice for the conductor to be mounted on a podium in order that the singers will be able to closely observe his every movement. Nothing must be left to chance. In front of the director's podium there must be placed a director's stand. It should be strong; there must be a good rack and the base for the stand must be heavy, so that there is not the constant danger of tipping.

During rehearsals it has been the practice of the writer to have a seat high enough to see above the group and to permit some opportunity for resting. It is especially desirable to use the seat when rehearsing separate parts or for rest periods. This may not appear as a big factor in conducting rehearsals, but it must be remembered that when as many as eight, ten, or more hours per week may be so employed, it does appear unnecessary for the conductor to unduly tire himself by having his legs maintain the full dead weight of his body over such long periods of time.

Chapter VI

THE REHEARSAL

Introduction

THE consummation of the conductor's musicianship, personality, idiosyncrasies, leadership qualities, humor, mannerisms, his very being, is completely manifest in the first few minutes of a rehearsal. All of the factors that go into the making of a finished artistic conductor may be revealed long before a public performance; long before the public has had a chance to assess his general musicianship. Generally speaking, the great, successful, and permanently satisfying choral conductor is a composite of all factors leading up to a successful performance of choral works. Certainly, the successful leader of choral groups has to a maximum degree eliminated a greater majority of those factors making for an atmosphere of uneasiness; the latter may be due to any one or all of the factors described as being essential to choral conducting.

Conducting choral organization means dealing with human beings. There must be elements of human kindness if the director is courting success. Those leaders who have built and established great reputations in the field of choral singing have been personalities of great human understanding and musicianship.

Secondary School Choirs. If choirs are able to meet during the regularly scheduled program of a child's day, then much of the disagreeableness of exhaustive singing, which comes as a result of after school rehearsing, is eliminated. As is frequently done, choirs are required to do their rehearsing when the rest of the students are excused for the remainder of the day. If rehearsals come after school hours, the members are penalized for being in the organization and they are exhausted physically because they have been sitting in classes all day with little opportunity for recuperative rest. Singing is most exacting physically and the students' voices respond better when they are fresh.

Collegiate Choirs. What has been said about secondary rehearsals is likewise applicable at this juncture. Generally, collegiate choirs are forced to rehearse during the later hours of the school day or in the evening. Factors of transportation determine whether the college students will be able to come more conveniently before six o'clock or after that hour. Many times the conductor has no choice in the matter and will be glad to schedule the rehearsals when he can accommodate the greatest number of those interested in singing.

Attendance. An efficient group of officers is an invaluable asset in running a choral organization. Some one of the officers (secretary) or some specially delegated person should be assigned to account for each individual's attendance. It will be found that those directors who are inexorable about the punctuality of the singers and the promptness with which they attend the opening of each rehearsal will in no small measure contribute to the esteem in which the organization is held in each singer's mind.

Each singer should be required to attend every rehearsal. Complete devotion to the organization must be exacted. A vocally balanced organization implies a

certain number of singers on each part. If balance is accurately gauged, the loss of any singer's contribution will be felt.

Every singer or member of the organization has a legitimate right to understand why another member of his section is absent. Each member is part of the successful operation of the section or choir and by the same token, no person gets the impression that he is indispensable to the success of the group. Again, it must be emphasized that attendance and punctuality must be religiously exacted. Rehearsal time is always wanting and no one person ever arrives at the point of perfection; consequently no time must be lost from scheduled rehearsals.

The Psychology of Good Attendance. Some one has said that, "Nothing succeeds like success." No place is that more true than in the development of the choral group. The spearhead in the psychological approach to choral singing lies at the feet of the conductor. In volunteer choral singing groups, the director must first be a strong personality with great leadership qualities. Musicianship without a vigorous individual is greatly nullified in its effectiveness for securing an enduring, all-encompassing, and organizational enthusiasm for choral work.

What are some of the factors in building good morale for rehearsals? First, it would seem imperative that a group must spend some time in learning at least a limited repertoire. But all learning must have an objective. It must lead somewhere. All learning is directed toward a future utilization objective. The youth of our land practice long hours at baseball, basketball, or football, because they know that competition is ahead. People in all walks of life endure arduous exercise, either physical or mental for purposeful use. Unless choral practice is a part of some curriculum requirement, it is palpable that people will attend practice for the purpose of learning how to sing music effectively. When it is finally learned they want to perform it. Obviously that is why we have concerts. Some people want to perform music, while others are desirous of just listening to music.

Just as soon as it is possible, it is prudent to give the group an opportunity to perform in public. This incentive to perfect their choral efforts for performance improves the quality of the musical output of any group. Public approval is a most potent force for stimulating achievement. With the onset of a scheduled concert, group cohesiveness is brought about, rehearsals' efficiency is more readily obtained, with the natural concomitant of more effective musical results. The product of the whole effort is that the organization's esprit-de-corps reaches a new level of attainment.

Required Rehearsals. Whether for secondary or collegiate choral groups, it may be said that a minimum of three rehearsals a week is required. This is true if any amount of public performance throughout the academic year is contemplated. One meeting per week does not permit proper spacing of learning. If but one rehearsal is arranged, too much time is spent during each of the meetings in relearning what has been lost during the interim. If good soloists need continual refreshing of text and music, it is only natural to expect large groups of individual personalities to require frequent meetings for good cohesive choral singing. If four or five rehearsals can be arranged, much unnecessary extra last minute rehearsing will be obviated. Absolute confidence on the part of all singers will insure better public performance. This comes from knowing their music. Rehearsals are inseparably linked with ultimate musical performance. Duration of the rehearsal is not so important as its frequency. A good length for a rehearsal period is fifty

minutes. Three such periods, distributed during a week, should accrue good results. As a last warning it must not be forgotten that all rehearsals should begin on time and end on time. If the conductor is lax in this respect, what can he expect of his singers?

Legitimate Excuses. In order that one does not feel that the former statements do not allow for legal excuses, it may be well to insert a comment about them. Religious holidays, serious illness, and other troubles of a severe character are valid considerations. It is best to have all excuses referred to the conductor for consideration. His advisory group in debatable situations may be either an attendance committee or the officers who may assist him in determining an excuse's validity. It is positively amazing how many absences can be eliminated by proper planning on the part of the choristers. It is generally better to take the attitude that the conductor must have all his personnel before him for each rehearsal; those who find it impossible to adjust their personal programs should be replaced by those who can make the necessary adjustments.

The Use of Alternates. It has been the writer's experience that successful choral men have not relied for success upon one organization. Competition always instills achievement into the hearts of individuals.

A good idea would be to have two organizations; one is a select group which receives opportunity to represent the school more often than the second group. It travels throughout the state, does the broadcasting, and in it will be found the better singers, and certainly those people who have made real sacrifices in time to perfect their joint performance.

The second choir is composed of all freshman collegiate choristers. Many of these people have had but limited or no experience in singing organizations. They do have in their favor some degree of musicianship, acceptable voices, and a willingness to sacrifice time for the cause of group performance. All members of the second choir are given the understanding that they will have first opportunity to compete for vacancies in the first choir as they occur. Any awards that are given will be offered on the same basis to each group. All privileges that the first choir enjoys will be extended to the second or third choirs. It is impossible, however, that a person may remain in the second choir for four years or for the entire duration of his stay in school.

The system of *first* balancing the *first choir* and then allowing alternates to join the group may be used. They attend all rehearsals and they are assigned to a certain number of individuals of a given section. Mary Jones, being a first soprano, may be assigned to three first sopranos of the first choir. If for any reason, any one of the three young ladies becomes seriously ill, or does not present a legal excuse for an absence, she is permanently replaced by Mary Jones. If the replaced first soprano returns, she is given the opportunity of joining the second choir and earning the right to a place in the first choir after a lapse of one year. The philosophy that no one has the right, but earns the right to become a member of any organization, will go a long way towards improving discipline, morale, and general musical performance of the performing groups.

If the first choir has twelve first sopranos, it is patent then that four alternate firsts would be employed in the first group. This method of using alternates is applied to each section of the choir. It is obvious that this system is a wonderful technique for administering esprit-de-corps. If a regular choir member values his right to belong to his singing organization, he is going to make certain his gen-

tlemanly right to belong to the choir. Subtle vanity which creeps up at times is relegated by this method to a more objective basis of adjudicating an individual's worth to an organization.

Officers. It is true that many times officers are selected who may be disappointing, but even then there are many occasions when they are of inestimable value. They act as a fine buffer between the director and the chorus. They can get things done which may prove difficult for the conductor. There are many times an unsolicited mouthpiece which speaks intelligently and helpfully to the conductor. They help the director to sense in what direction the "wind is blowing."

It is of great importance that officers be allowed to function. When given responsibility they must be taught to carry out their assignments. An important part of any conductor's job is the demonstration of his leadership qualities. The world needs strong leadership. The various offices that individuals hold can become great training opportunities for future leadership. The administrative work of the director can contribute much toward effecting through his officers desirable attitudes, discipline, morale, and general esprit-de-corps which will aid materially in developing a chorus of high achievement.

Section Leaders. Well established choirs generally have section leaders. They should be chosen on their ability. Musical ability is not the sole consideration. Seniority, attendance, ability to sing with good intonation, knowledge of the fundamentals of music, and piano playing ability are admirable assets. The writer has employed section leaders for attaining unusual amounts of rehearsing in a short period of time. Good section leaders can be trained. They can rehearse their sections separately for the conductor. Thus on any given rehearsal day four strenuous part rehearsals can be conducted. These sectionals can be held one or more days per week as the conductor sees fit and then it will be possible for joint meetings on the remaining days. Especially valuable is this type of work during the learning stages of any new material. A tremendous waste of time is spent with choruses during any rehearsal period when the conductor has to use much of his time in pounding out parts for the poor readers. It might be argued, "Why don't you select good sight readers?" It is very common knowledge that singers are poor musicians and especially are they deficient in sight reading skills. It takes great leadership on the part of the instructor to convince his whole choir the seriousness of cherishing all the minutes allotted to rehearsals.

Handing Out Music. A very important phase of each rehearsal is the manner in which the handing out of music is expedited. Many directors have found it valuable to use a rib-rock folder of sufficient dimensions to hold octavo music. This folder should be well constructed. A gambelized back has proven practical; it wears well.

Another feature of handing out music and getting the rehearsal under way in the shortest possible time is to have all the music numbered; numbered not by total number of copies for each selection, but give to each different selection a specific number. In this way the choristers will not have to look up the name of each number, but will have to refer only to a given number. Thus in calling for selections, the singers will have to look only on the cover of each composition for the number that is placed there in large print. It is much simpler to call for number "seven" instead of some title which may be lengthy in character. The numbers, of course, will have to be placed on each composition prior to their original insertion in each folder.

Vocalize Warm-ups. A practice which has been followed by this writer for a number of years is that of warming-up the choir at the beginning of each rehearsal. The first five minutes of each rehearsal can be well spent in teaching the singers something about breathing and good tone quality through the execution of vocalizes. It is certain to assist the conductor in getting a blend of tone quality which will go a long way toward improving a singing tone.

Beginning with the first rehearsal of the season, it is very possible for the director to determine in his own mind whether the inherent tone quality of the group is on the bright side or on the dark side. That is, though the director in selecting voices has the opportunity to choose, he is still circumscribed by the inherent quality of the voices at his command. Singers can do much in these preliminary vocalize warm-ups with respect to intonation, vowel formation, articulation of vowels, breath control, proper breathing, poise, legato singing, and a number of other musicianly singing characteristics. It must be kept in mind that it is not a session where people are just opening mouths and going through a number of exercises with little activity from "the neck line up." It must be an intelligent and concentrated effort toward a specific goal, the goal being no better than that which is set up for the students by the director.

Procedure in Learning New Music. Many years ago, the Minneapolis course of study had a logical sequence of learning new music: Tone, time, notes, words, and expression. If a person will make serious study of the implications involved and apply his reasoning to the logical sequence in learning new music, very little deviation can logically follow. It is impossible to put the finishing touches on a composition when people are engrossed in learning how to produce tone. The first three, i.e., tone, time, and notes are of immediate concern in first approaching the study of a new song. Many conductors employ the part-method of learning the music. Then there are those who deviate from the more commonly accepted method of learning music. However, some of the more common methods of learning music are as follows:

I. *The Part-Method.* Undoubtedly this parcel technique used for teaching music quickly produces less irritation in the learning process than any other known method. This is not to imply that it is the best educational method over a long period of time. It is customary to learn a few measures at a time. As it is very easy for the sopranos to get the melody, it seems more worthwhile to rehearse the inside parts individually. It seems that there is little preference by most conductors whether it should be the altos, tenors, or basses first. The author has found it worthwhile to let the sectional leaders rehearse their respective sections and then little of the tone-time-note learning is left for him when the joint rehearsals are called.

II. *The Whole-Method.* For long range preparation the author has found this technique most satisfactory. It seems to expedite the speed with which a season's repertoire is to be learned. With the part method the learning accurately of one, two, or three numbers comes sooner, but the learning of the remainder of the repertoire is delayed; many times the numbers taken up later in the learning process show their lack of long range planning when performed in concert. Part-learning unless in the hands of an inspired conductor may lead to rehearsals which lack variety and many times the choristers sicken of these numbers because they have been a steady diet for sustained periods of learning. The whole-method of learning adds variety to the learning process and makes for better balanced rehearsal diets.

III. *You Learn It First Method.* This method demands that the student learn the music before coming to rehearsal. There are a few ideal choral set-ups in the United States which permit this method to operate. Generally speaking this system is identified with professional singers or with collegiate groups whose members are majors or minors in departments of music. Of the merits of this system the writer is unable to speak.

Studying the Text. Preparation for any successful performance of choral literature implies a thorough study of the text. Steps which have been found helpful in attaining interpretational success could include these:

1. *Memorize the Text.* This is one sure way of understanding what the words are in the song.
2. *Know the Metre of the Text.* A good composer should understand the relationship of the metre to the rhythm and rhythmic balance of phrases.
3. *Study the Pronunciation.* Study the pronunciation of each word for voiced, voiceless, consonantal beginnings and endings, syllabic emphasis, peculiar rhythmic problems having bearing on textual interpretation, etc.
4. *Study the Dynamics.* Study the dynamic possibilities for aiding in the interpretation of the text. Dynamics, dramatics, emphasis—these are all a part of intelligently conveying the message of any song.
5. *Study the Interpretational Possibilities.* The sequence in arriving at interpretational success is not so definite. The portals to this attainment are open to all. The simplest and most effectual way of arriving at this objective is true art. It can be obtained for the price of hard intelligent study. There are no secret rules. The rules are the laws which have been given to and are within the reach of all men.
6. *Study the Technique of Delivery.* Once the singer has absorbed himself with the various musical and intellectual features involved in textual delivery, he must learn to overtly convey all that the music expresses in order that a contact will be made betwen him and the music itself. To feel is not enough; the interpreter must be able to convey to others the fullness of music's power—that being, to create impressions.
7. *Study Voice and Its Problems.* The interpreter of choral art does not arrive until he has mastered the technical phases of singing on the one hand and a thorough understanding of music on the other.
8. *Study to Become a Thorough Singer-Musician.* The complete singer is one who has fused and mastered the intellectual, technical, and emotional power of song.

Order of Rehearsing Compositions. Just good lesson planning sense should be applied at this point. The criteria would be: "How is it possible to create sustained interest for fifty minutes?" A good plan is to start the rehearsal with compositions that are familiar, yet need some definite work. After some time the newer works or those that are more difficult should receive attention. Nobody is interested in doing fifty minutes of drill. After a spell of hard concentrated learning, the closing minutes of the rehearsal can be devoted to singing numbers that the chorus particularly enjoys or those which, because they are easier or more time has been spent on them, are in the stage of "finishing." That is, the interpretive aspects of the music are now uppermost in the minds of the singers and the conductor. Re-

member, that whether it is golf, dancing, or singing, the learning process is generally the most uninteresting part of the activity.

A great psychological factor in effecting an interesting rehearsal will be accomplished through the proper order of rehearsing selections. Variety helps to add interest during rehearsals. Choristers may be taxed emotionally and intellectually by the dffiiculties encountered in the learning process of certain selections. It is wise to determine the selections which particularly please the majority of the group. Try to instill learning interest by allowing every rehearsal to include some of the "favorites." Be on guard to forestall the ever present tendency to over work the known passages at the expense of frequent attention to unknown sections of a composition. Be sure that all parts get the attention they need. Help the singers overcome their errors. The initial learning process should be as accurate as possible.

The Element of Accomplishment. Within a very short period of time a group of singers is able to assess just about how much it is going to achieve by remaining in a given choral organization. It must be remembered that all choral singers do not have a burning zeal to sing. To these people this particular section is addressed. If students are going to spend their valuable time rehearsing, especially at the end of the school day, they are going to be vitally concerned about what they are getting out of their effort.

Every rehearsal period must show progress. Those who are working valiantly to achieve what is apparently in the mind of the conductor must leave a rehearsal with a feeling that accomplishment has taken place. They have a right to expect that achievement is taking place. The conductor's leadership is constantly asserted and he must possess such remarkable qualities that his choristers feel growth all about them during their singing experiences.

A rehearsal period and the techniques for controlling the personnel may be compared to a football team. When the eleven men take the field one person is delegated to run the team. Democracy exists only in so far as every man is permitted to share in the success of the next and every succeeding play. One person is the quarterback; he runs the show. Likewise in the training and conducting of a chorus, one person, the conductor, is responsible for all directions. There may be others in the chorus who have good ideas, but a rehearsal period is not the place to work them out. People want action and the conductor is responsible for split-second intelligent action. A leader of a choral organization cannot be a hesitating, undecisive, and phlegmatic personality.

SIGN POSTS TO SUCCESSFUL REHEARSALS

1. Attendance at rehearsals is mandatory.
2. The rehearsal must be a dynamic musical experience; it must suffuse the participants with an aesthetic consciousness of music's beauty.
3. Each rehearsal must be a learner-centered experience—an opportunity for experiencing growth in skills of tonal production and the art of singing.
4. Do not ever permit the question of attendance to be challenged.
5. Stationary seating arrangements are preferred to the movements of countless chairs.
6. Elevated semi-circular seating arrangements are conducive to cohesive results based on the ability of sections and singers within sections to hear what each other individual is doing.

7. If more than one rehearsal period is scheduled during each week, experience has shown that great accomplishment can be achieved in sixty minutes; intermission or rest periods are unnecessary. People who value their time do not want to waste valuable time in non-productive ways.
8. Employ a style of conducting that is easily understood. Simplicity makes for directness and speed of comprehension of direction.
9. Have specific seating arrangements which are comparable to positions to be used at time of public performance.
10. Seat the good singers so that they are effective for the entire ensemble. Generally speaking their place is at the rear of the group to reinforce tonal effectiveness.
11. Never rehearse without an objective. Always have a performance goal for attainment. In competitive sports people practice unending hours in order to pit their skill against opposition. Choral groups will want to put their best foot forward if they know that they are to appear in public.
12. Each rehearsal must be an educative experience. A choral group must feel that it is continually learning worthwhile vocal techniques, vocal literature, deriving pleasure, and satisfying its inherent desire to musical expression.
13. The conductor must realize that he is working with individuals who are not likely to be his equal in musical ability and therefore it is imperative that he never lose control of his good judgment in handling a personality or musical situation. Problems of this character are only situations and are generally temporary in character.
14. Good conducting backed by knowledge and sublimated by high musical idealisms will catch first with *any* group.
15. Never permit a choral organization to attend a rehearsal wherein but little time is devoted to unified singing; one part should not be continually rehearsed at the expense of others; the individual rehearsing of parts should be distributed so that all sections have equal opportunity to participate.
16. Generally speaking a rehearsal should be started with familiar works. Put a good taste in their mouths at the beginning and conclude the rehearsal period with something familiar and that which is sure to send them on their way feeling how good it is to belong to the organization.
17. Conductors should refrain from talking too much and should teach more. The rehearsal period is for the purpose of singing and it should not become a sociability center. Students never rebel against purposeful work.

Chapter VII

CHORAL PROBLEMS

First Things First. A common observation is the futile attempt on the part of some conductors to try to accomplish too many types of choral activities at one or two rehearsals; then, too, the correct objectives are sought out of their proper sequence. It seems quite obvious to the experienced director that certain attainments are possible in the early and later learning of any composition.

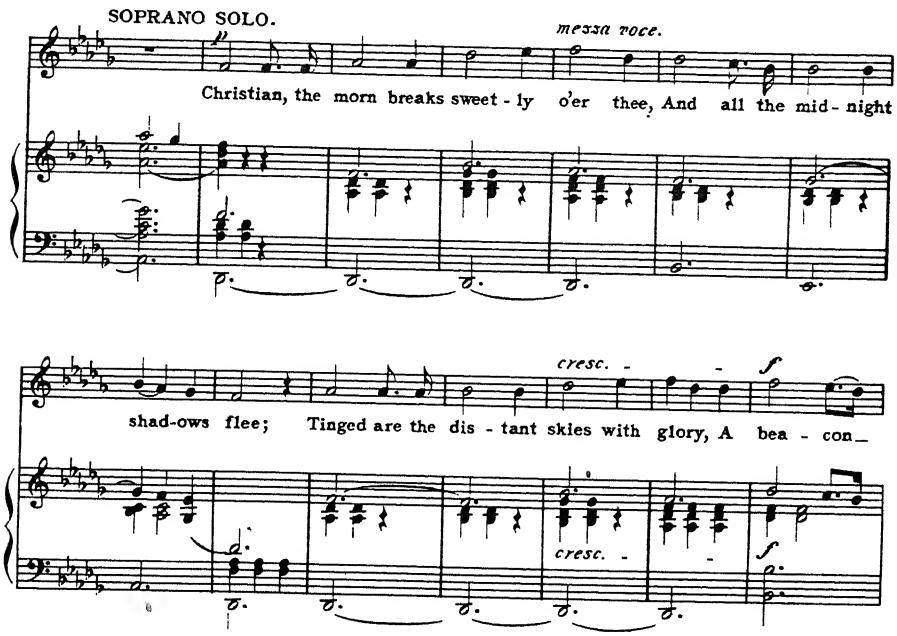
What is the reasonable procedure for learning music? Certainly a person who is beginning to learn a composition must relegate the question of tonal and dynamic nuances to the final stages of preparation. First, tone must be made. The choristers must be taught *how* to produce good tone. Just shouting "sing" is not enough. Breathing is essential to the proper delivery of the tone. There certainly is a logical sequence to the learning of most musical works. As has been said before, the one employed by the Minneapolis Public Schools properly epitomizes the idea. It was: Tone, Time, Notes, Words, and Expression. This is as good a keystone to the arch of all rehearsing sequences as has ever come to the writer's attention.

The Philosophy of Expression Marks. It is a common observation that great music is not over burdened with expression marks. Some of the greatest masters of the classic and romantic schools only infrequently indicated interpretation. Individuality of textual delineation naturally implies musical stylism. There is certainly a musical way of interpreting music. No matter what human emotion is expressed, every interpreter has his peculiar way of reacting. No emotional idea is so positive as to elicit the same interpretation from each individual. There is much literature that has interpreters, who are living pupils of the music's creator. The more mechanical aspects such as tempi have been indicated. These facts should be observed. It goes without saying that traditions need re-evaluation. The greater the musician, the greater the imagination. Creative performance demands recreative powers. The greater the musical composition, the greater will be the demands upon the imaginative powers of the musician.

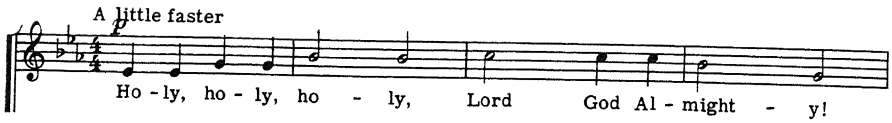
Phrasing for Textual Sense. The master conductor and singer must everlastingly labor in the interest of combining the musical and the thought values within the figures, phrases, motives, sections, and periods. A song must make sense. The phrase and all its entities must be so musically conceived that they will materially aid in enhancing the beauty of the thought. The musical phrase has its thought; the word has its metre; the music has its metre; the phrase line has its nuance and dynamics; the words collectively express communicative thought; all those must be fused together in order that an intellectual idea may be enhanced by music and become communicatively beautiful; such is music's mission. Musical stylism does not exist until the conductor or the singer has given these factors their due consideration.

The Phrase Line. In singing a phrase it is imperative that the artist recognize dynamic changes which are common to phrases which rise and fall. As the phrase line rises there is usually a demand for an increase in volume; when it falls it usually implies a decrease. The singer who delivers the musical phrase unit without due recognition of the dynamic change just robs it of its entire musical worth. There are occasions when the conductor or singer must recognize this most important value. Though the prosody of the given phrase is the life blood of the text, the dynamic contrasts of the music must be served. The following excerpt excellently depicts our thesis.

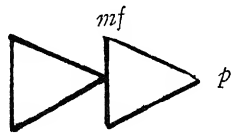
Illustration:



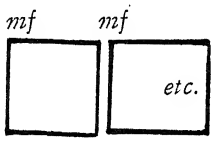
Robbed Dynamic Tonal Balances. The apparent handmaid to all other types of choral singing errors which are conducive to poor legato phrasing is the ever-present error on the part of groups to produce a quavering of dynamics on each or many notes within given phrases. It is palpable that between any two points within a phrase (notes) the dynamic range is not intentionally altered. A constant changing of the volume upon a given note within a series of notes (phrase) is not justifiable except where it is musically correct. For a conductor to allow his singers to everlastingly alter tonal dynamics is to invite phrase-wise and legato suicide. The following are illustrations in point:



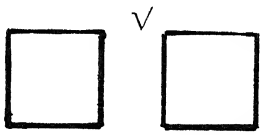
Common Error



Should Be



Technically Incorrect—see "Common Error"



(√) Too large (phrase, tongue, etc.,) spacial gap.

The important tonal observation is to demand that each tone during its duration should retain with reasonable fidelity the dynamic volume assigned to it. The only exceptions to this would be for special *sfz* or *sf* or *sfp* effects or to purposefully create a descrescendo or diminuendo. If a conductor will be meticulous about tonal balances, great improvement will result in phrasing, legato, intonation, and ensemble balance.

Dynamics Concept. This is another of those basic musicianly concepts that is very likely talked about, read about, and possibly understood, but frequently is knowledge that is not applied to music. Every conductor must work out a dynamic range for his choral groups. He must thoroughly understand that any dynamic marking such as *mf, f, ff, pp, p, mp,* etc., is a suggestion which can only be applied in relation to the degree of which his group is capable.

It would seem that a more sensible approach would be to work out the dynamic range for his specific group. If the group is small and is incapable of dynamics which are not beyond a forte (f), then it will be necessary for him to evaluate his pianissimo (pp) tones. Some choral organizations do not have the faintest conception of what a *pp* marking sounds like when executed in relationship to that same group's fortissimos (*ff*). The important fact here is the degree of variation and not how effectively the group can produce any one of the many dynamic degrees which are often used in the course of singing many songs. Good contrasts in dynamics can be created within a rather limited range.

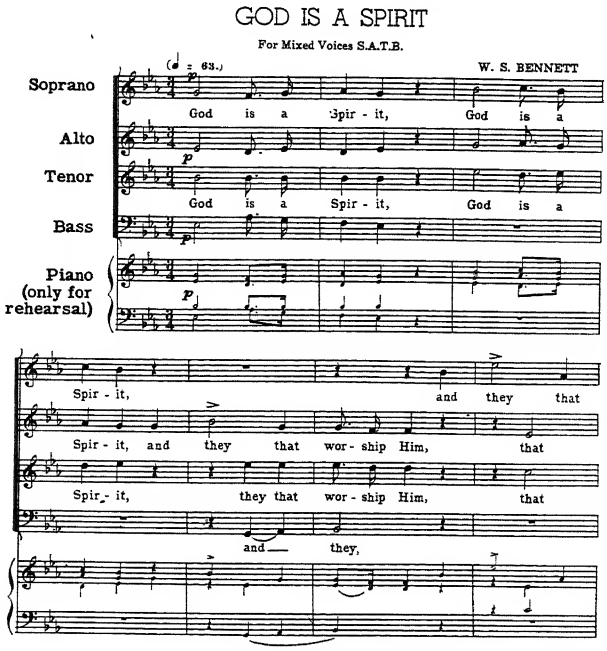
Robbed Notational Durations. One of the most flagrant technical errors committed by choral groups is the insistent habit of robbing notes of their tonal duration. Inherent in this practice is the inability of many choral groups to produce finished phrases. Chopped endings of phrases, constantly diminishing dynamics of each tone, and the ever present slovenly habit of not understanding the basic essentials of good English, will inevitably result from the practice of stealing durational time from note values.

Now just what is the problem. Like the old statement that the down-beat in conducting is always after the bar, so is the value of notes not tonally completed until the next or sequential tonal duration is started. The end of a quarter note in 4/4 time is not consummated until the second quarter or beat begins. In the same time signature, a half note is not completely sung until the beginning of the third beat. In other words the tonal duration of any note is not realized until the next note is to begin receiving its value.

The good singing organization is built and developed because it director is insistent upon details. This discussion is very rudimentary, but the writer's adjudication of hundreds of choral organizations has convinced him that robbed notational values are among the most flagrant of errors caused by directors and singers. (For the principle in this discussion, see Chapter II, section: "The Jaw Is In The Way.")

Rests. It is obvious that a rest is not a pause. The rhythmic pulsation of the song marches on through these musical markers when no sound is being delivered. The great error at this point is that the movement of the piece is invariably vitiated during these rests. The flow of the composition must never be thwarted—the music breathes rhythmic sensitivity even during these musical silence characters. Pauses are principally determined by the music and the text. We learn pause stylism by studying music.

Illustration: *God Is A Spirit*



Do not lose the rhythmic flow even though measures may be completed by rests. The rhythmic life of the composition must everlastingly *march* forward through rests.

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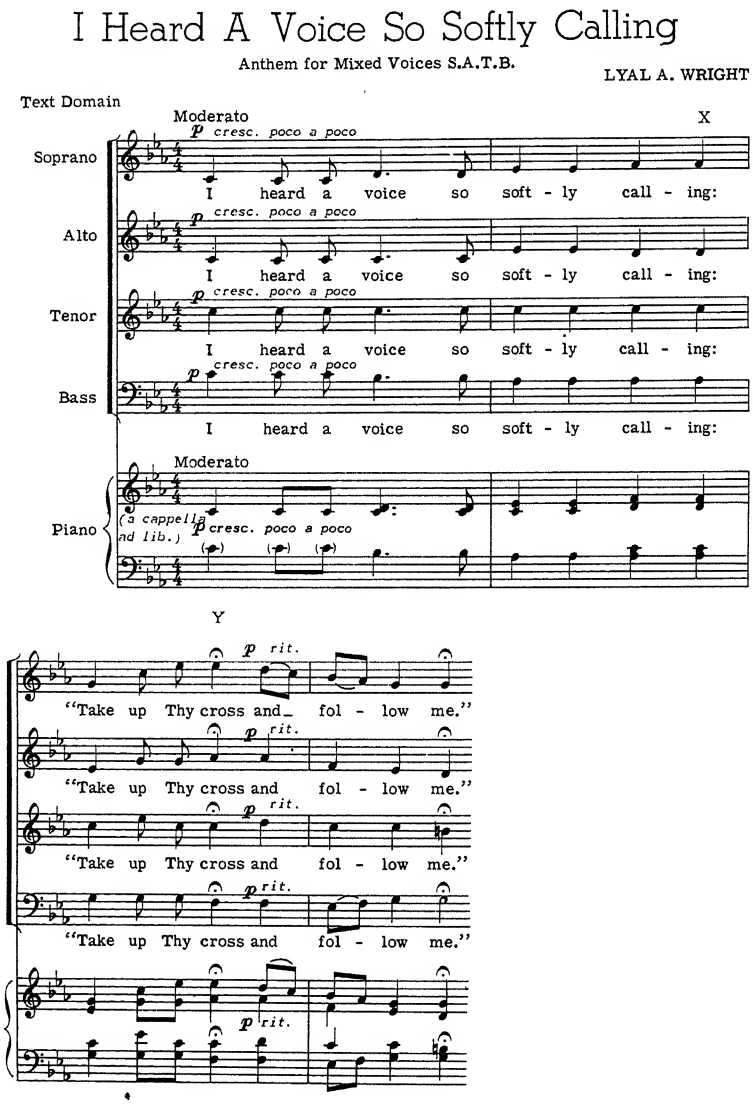
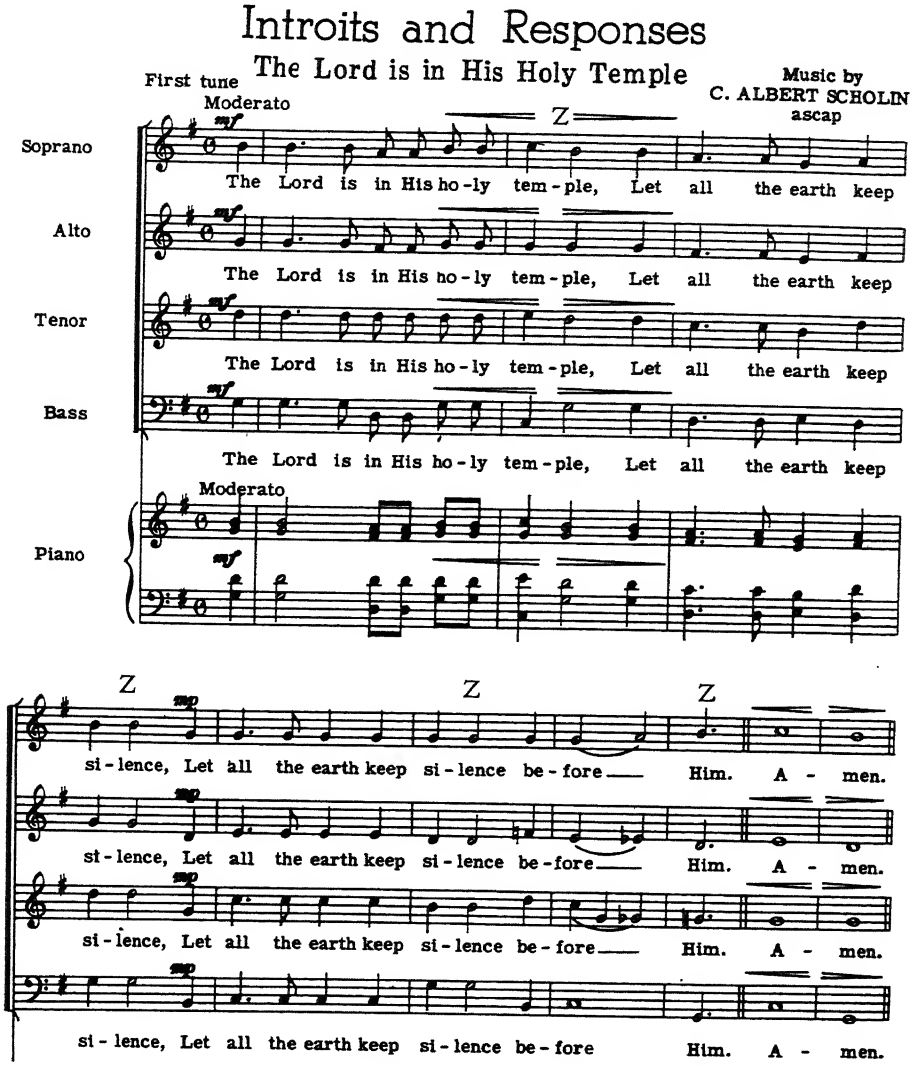
Fermata. The hold sign occurring frequently in musical compositions is always much cause for discussion. How long should the pause be? Then, too, there are those conductors who are creating Fermata in music which is not even written in the score. The latter unmusical habit is the cause for this discussion. (Illustration X: "I Heard A Voice So Softly Calling.")

It must be remembered that the hold, fermata, or pause interferes with the march of the song. The song must march on to a very definite goal, that being the culmination of its objective to convey a message. The conductor, the singer, and those who are the re-creators of art must not let superficial embellishments occur to thwart such an act. (Illustration Y: "I Heard A Voice So Softly Calling.")



A very common pause which the composer may not have even indicated occurs in certain compositions. They may be dramatic hesitancies which the sensitive musician is conscious of but certainly does not over indulge in musically. These frequently occur in slow compositions. (Illustration Z: "The Lord is in His Holy Temple.")



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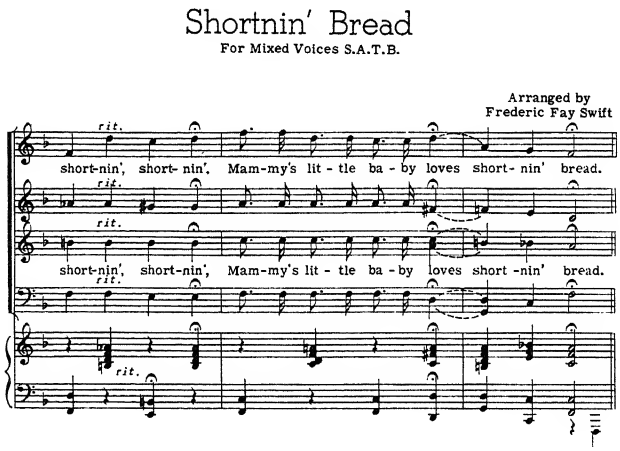
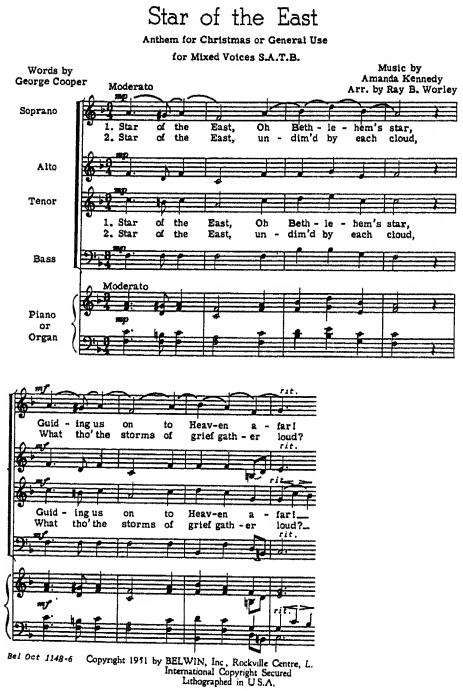
Another type of Fermata would be the one actually written in by the arranger or composer. These, too, must be treated musically and should be considered as notational or dramatic textual pauses. (Illustration: Excerpt from "Shortnin' Bread.")



Scooping or Slurring. "Scooping" or slurring is the most vicious of all habits. It is the most common fault to be unconsciously indulged in by singers—all soloists whether they be vocalists or instrumentalists. (Illustration: "Star of the East." The curved lines indicate opportunity for slurring.)



There are all degrees of slurring. Many conductors are unconscious of its effects on the singing performance. They are so occupied with getting students to produce correct notes, rhythm, pronunciation, articulation, phrasing, and other musicianly qualities that they forget or never observe such sutble errors as the slurring of notes and words. Upon occasion it is even possible to hear a miniature glissando being sung.

The use of scooping or slurring by a choir will immeasurably impair intonation. The reason for this is that in large groups it will be found that between chords many intermediary or false pitches are being sung. This materially "muddies up" harmonizations.* These "free-will" inaccuracies are certain to be materially responsible for vitiating the intonation.

Trochees. These words are indicated by the metrical foot measurement marking of •

Illustration:

Mary, Johnny, Harry
bungle, meaning

It is positively amazing the number of choral conductors who reveal constant ignorance of prosody. If the metre of given words is incorrectly conceived, it is palpable that the composition's rhythm will of necessity be altered. As a matter of critical observation, most directors and singers reveal almost total ignorance of textual, prosodial, or metrical meaning or structure.

*See Chapter on Diction.

What is true of trochee is applicable to iambic ∪ ——, dactyl —— ∪ ∪, the anapest ∪ ∪ ——, and to the spondee —— ——. The author does not deny the existence of the secondary accent; it too is important, but undue importance must not be given the unaccented syllable.

Illustration:

Iambic	(∪ ——)	behold
Trochee	(—— ∪)	money
Dactyl	(—— ∪ ∪)	mournfully
Anapest	(∪ ∪ ——)	intervene
Spondee	(—— ——)	sprigtail

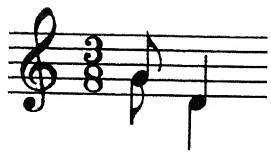
Beware of Word Elision. In the opinion of this writer the use of the elision is among the worst of choral dictional habits.

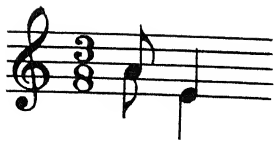
Illustration:

"Such as"	Su	*ch*as
"Men and Women"	Men	*n*and Women
"Much as"	Muc	*ch*as
"Round and Round"	Roun	*d*and Round
"Many and Many"	Many	*y*and Many

Vowel Substitutions. One of the most prevalent errors in singing words with two vowels, one each in the primary and secondary syllables is the habit of substituting an incorrect form. In rapid passages the pronunciation of the following words is not so disturbing, but in slower passages it becomes a very slovenly habit

Illustration:





Often sung	här	kûn	tā	kûn
Should be sung	heark	ĕhn	tāk	ĕhn
Phonetically	hä	ĕn	tā	ĕn

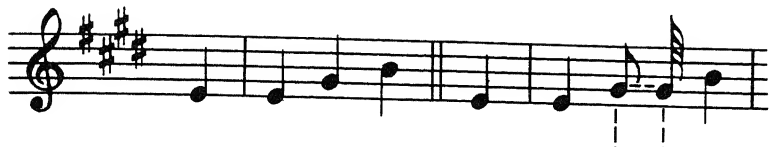
If sung as indicated the brilliance of the word's correct vowel forms is lost and the pronunciation is incorrect. Additional illustrations of the same error in pronunciation are:

Maiden	maid	ûhn	maid	ĕhn
Laden	laid	ûhn	laid	ĕhn
Eternity	eter	nûhty	eter	nĭhty

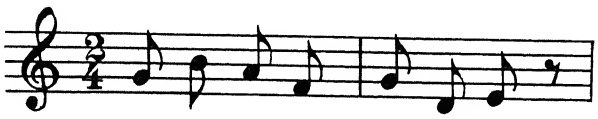
Words Beginning With Vowels. It is generally accepted by those who listen to music critically, that words beginning with vowels are the cause for pronunciation errors. The following are very patent:

Word or Phrase	Open the gates
Sung	(H)_open the gates
Word	Oh!
Sung	(H)_oe
Word	And
Sung	(H)_and
Phrase	Joy and Crown
Sung	Joy (H)_and Crown
Phrase	Hand and Hand
Sung	Hand (H)_and Hand

Word Endings and Sequential Words Beginning With Consonants.



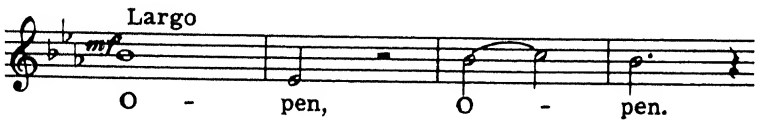
Phrase:	As	I	Went	Out;			
Often sung:	As	I	Wen	Tout;			
Should be sung:	.....	.....	.....	.....	;	As	I Wen . . t out



Phrase:	pit — y,	pit — y,	pit — y	me,
Sung:	pi — ty,	pi — ty,	pi — ty	me,
Should be:	pĭt — ĭ	pĭt — ĭ	pĭt — ĭ	mē.

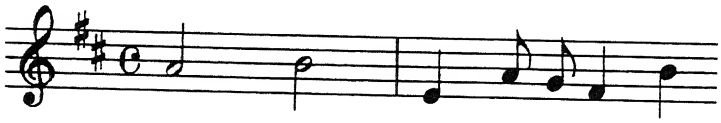
Vowels and Dramatic Hesitancy. Especially in slow phrases will the singer find trouble with *vowel sustainment* and effective articulation. Every complete word needs finish, especially those that end with a consonant. It has been found that a dramatic hesitancy helps in word delivery and completion.

Illustration:



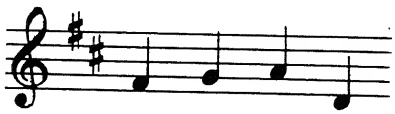
Phrase:	o	pen,	o	pen.
Phonetics:	ō	ĕ	ō	ĕ
Spatial Diagram:				
Vowel and/or consonant duration:	ō	p ĕhn	ō	p ĕhn

In the case of both of these illustrations the singer must devote as much time as possible to the fundamental vowel *o* before dramatically setting forth the (p) which starts the sequential syllable which finishes the word and gives it meaning; he must not sing the next sequential vowel (o) of the word *open* without making the necessary mental reaction for its delivery which must of necessity be a pure ō. The English language is somewhat inadequate to describe the dramatic hesitancy which must set forth each consonant (p), but the spatial time involved in each consumed tonal area is relatively indicated. There must be a dramatic momentary hesitancy in order to properly deliver the syllable *pen*. Other illustrations include:



Words	gave	His	on	ly	be	got	ten
Phonetics (Vowel)	āv	ĭh	ō	ē	ē	äh	ĕh
Frequently sung	av	Hiss	sōn	ē	ē	ä	ĕh
Should be sung	āv	Hiz	ōn	ē	ē	ä	ĕh

The same question of dramatic hesitancy must be applied in the case of the word "His." First, correct pronunciation must be given to the word. Care must be taken that the phonetic "iz" is not elided with the word "only." In the following excerpt the same care must be exercised with the word "lasting."



Phrase:	last	ing	life,	A
Not	las	ting	līf ,	ûh
But	last	ing	līf ,	ûh

The vowel form must be held as long as possible, the "t" being included at the last moment of the note's value. The consonant ending in a syllable is tacked onto the succeeding syllable or word; such a practice very often results in eliding or shovelling. Naturally this should not be condoned. This subject we have discussed in another section of this chapter.

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Chapter VIII

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

Introduction

ARTISTIC creation demands an outlet for expression. For that matter whether it be music, football, baseball, or other activities involving personalities and where the element of competition is involved, individuals like to have contests in order to pit their abilities against each other. Such activities need an opportunity to perform.

Whether on the stage or singing by the campfire, probably no single human activity can weld together a group of people with such ease and rapidity as can choral singing. Choral singing is a communicative art. Because it uses a language it is essentially satisfying intellectually and aesthetically. As a matter of fact, it is a medium for conveying man's language arts; it has powers of intellectual eloquence.

Man is a creative genius. He does not create solely for his own satisfaction. Essentially he creates because men use the products of man's mind and hand. It is even doubtful that he would create if there were no opportunity for him to demonstrate to his fellowmen his success. Fundamentally the idea is: Why create if the created product serves no other purpose than activity for activity's sake. The creative instinct in man is a dominant motivating force which keeps mind and hand in a healthy condition. When the creative spark dies, man has for all purposes lost interest in this ephemeral world. The artist is not a painter unless he paints; the singer is not a singer unless he sings; the orator must orate.

A Musical Necessity. From the foregoing discussion it can be seen that it would be highly ridiculous to expect children or choirs to endlessly practice without having the opportunity of sharing their acquired skill with their fellowmen. Without any fear of equivocation it may be stated that the outstanding choirs, bands, orchestras, and musical ensembles of all types have been nurtured in an environment of constant performance and have been stimulated to greater activity through the competition and festival. The competitive instinct of man demands opportunity for comparative achievement. Without public performance to what realm of activity would musical organizations be relegated? With the possible exception of sports it is unlikely that any other subject is so universally enjoyed as is music.

Performance an Outgrowth of Good Departmental Work. The foregoing discussion is not an attempt to over emphasize public performance. Music departmental specialization can become the ruination of the good music education which should be the *summum bonum* of its force in education. The writer's discussion emphasizes the need for public performance, but all activities should be an outgrowth of spontaneous music activity within an institution. The most polished group of performers should realize that they are only an integral part of an all encompassing program in music education *for every child.*

Stage Seating. If small ensembles are used, it is sometimes most judicious to have certain singers, especially those in the front row, seated. As in the case of the English Singers, where madrigals are being sung, it would seem good practice to put the singers at ease with the informality that comes from seating the singers in the front row. It seems senseless to have a six foot conductor towering over ten or twelve singers. Unless the groups are professional in character it naturally means that a conductor will have to direct even such a small group as has been indicated.

Being seated will have little or no deleterious effects upon the singing performance. While singing it is recommended that the seated singers keep their backs away from the back of the seat and if possible have their bodies extremely supple at the waistline. Leaning slightly forward goes a long way toward making for ease in singing during performance. Then, too, seated choruses are more at ease while singing. Incidentally, a seated group whether small or large can be an interesting picture on the stage.

Choir Dress. At the present time there appears to be a fetish regarding robing and choir dress. It is true that a robed organization gives unity to appearance and possibly to performance of ensemble singing. But we are not convinced that high school choral organizations dressed in religious and extreme ecclesiastical gowned attire are fittingly dressed for the performance of secular music. It just does not make good sense. The author is not implying that robes should not be used; they should be judiciously used. Then, too, it must be realized that a public school is an interdenominational institution which certainly does not connote adherence to religious dress.

The Pitch Myth. It is obvious that pitch must come from somewhere. Personally it does not make any difference to the writer whether the pitch for choral presentations is given from the piano or comes from individuals located within sections of the choir who "sound" via a pitch pipe the starting tone for their respective sections. Those individuals who have absolute pitch can be very helpful to the conductor.

Pitch is a relative thing. No organization can produce perfect intonation in all parts upon every note in the singing of any composition. It is not a question whether the pitch is perfect. It is more important to know that the intonation is good. This is an ideal which is worshipped by the good musician and it righteously should be so. But let us not be a group of legerdemains in the public's eye. If in the singing of a cappella music a choir drops slightly in pitch, yet all parts move simultaneously to the newly adopted key, do not become unduly horrified. How many soloists, though they be first rank in character, can sustain absolute accuracy of intonation without accompaniment?

Who Takes the Applause. This question which involves discriminative use of good sense should be given serious consideration by the conductor. The question naturally posited is: "Whose performance is it?" Naturally it is the chorus' and not that of the conductor as we are so prone to dramatize in this country. It is the organization which contributes its musicianship at the behest of the leader. True, he molds the group, but his services are for the purpose of aiding them in giving a presentable performance. The conductor should share the honors with the group. Particularly is this advisable when conducting community organizations made up

The Conductor in Action. He is the spearhead in any program of music activities calling for public appearances. He, like no other teacher in the school system with the possible exception of the athletic and dramatic coaches, makes many public appearances; probably more than even the superintendent of schools. A tremendous responsibility rests upon the conductor of music organizations in any school system. Would it be asking too much of him to be the epitome of good taste? Probably the two words, *good taste,* best describe his every action in public.

On the stage he is a showpiece. He is the center of all interest; naturally, since he stands most of the time in the center of the stage. His purpose is to lead a group of performers through one or more compositions as unerringly as possible. Simplicity must be the watchword. Theoretically he should be as unobtrusive as possible. He is but a medium for helping a group of performers interpret compositions intelligently to an audience. It is the music that is of paramount importance. Any gesture or overt action which he commits is certain to detract from the true purpose of any composition's true intent. Let the conductor constantly keep in mind: True art is simple art; an artistic rendition needs no obtrusions on the part of the conductor. This sincerity of purpose is not entirely too prevalent with many of today's professionals. Gaudy display which carries them into realms of unbelievable physical gyrations, plus a temperament which is heavily seasoned with ego and temper, is most unfortunate from the point of view of educating our public musically. One rewarding consolation is that America is making progress musically. Educationally we are better off in this respect than we are professionally.

The Unobtrusive Conductor. The baton arm which delineates the metronomic movements and the other arm which aids the conductor in interpreting the music should pursue those movements which are purposeful and in keeping with the general nature of the composition. A simple composition needs simple treatment. A grandiose number permits treatment in keeping with its nature.

In walking to and from the podium the manner must be simple, yet convincing. Instead of a sluggish gait, the walk should indicate vigor and sincerity of purpose. He should recognize the audience in walking to and from the stage. It has been the author's observation that invariably they forget the existence of the group for whom they are to perform. In other words they almost totally ignore the group in the vicinity of the podium while directing. Many of them have their eyes seemingly transfixed on another world. If the conductor is inclined to stand flat-footed—he will be inclined to rock back and forth—all distracting mannerisms are unwarranted. Much of our prima donna conducting on the part of professional conductors has had a deleterious effect upon good music education in America. Educators must learn to penetrate superficiality in performance and evaluate the educational and musical merits of a given performer.

Choir stands. For concert appearance there is no question but that risers add much to the choir's performance, both from the musical and appearance point of view. Even during rehearsals immediately prior to a concert, much advantage can be derived from their use. The common varieties are either two or three-step in construction. For four or eight-part work it is almost imperative that the three-step type be employed.

of mature people. The professional groups who are organized for profit are quite different in purpose. Today many of these conductors are hired for their musicianship and their showmanship (sales ability) or the name they bear which will act as a drawing card. In this latter situation we are thinking in terms of box office attraction.

What would be good taste in the professional situation would not be judicious judgment in dealing with amateurs. In the latter case it might be well for the conductor at the conclusion of a group to step slightly to the right or left of center and back toward the group. This technique has a tendency for the conductor to become fused into the ensemble picture of acceptance. Certainly it is disgusting to see a choral conductor during a program of sixteen or eighteen numbers bob around at the conclusion of a number which takes but from two to four minutes to perform and take a personalized bow. It just is not consistent with good dramatics. It detracts from dramatic and thought continuity which should be built into every group; then, too, it detracts from sincerity of purpose. Whenever these prima donna demonstrations are in evidence, the discriminative listener is immediately disturbed. It seems absurd to argue sincerity of purpose relative to the music when a consonant quality is not evidenced by the conductor.

Concluding Remarks. Modern choral singing has made tremendous strides. This is due in part to the additional training and the widespread popularity being attached to group singing in our elementary, secondary, and collegiate institutions. Then too, people with a genius for organization and an enthusiasm for the art have been selected by discriminative administrators to bring about our present day achievements.

It is equally apparent that future progress is going to be dependent upon much more exacting criteria than have characterized our past attainments. Musical stylism is certain to result if the factors which have been discussed in this book will receive the choral conductor's serious attention. Choral conducting is not going to make great progress unless these basic techniques receive religious scrutiny. If there are secrets to choral success, they are to be found among those techniques which have been discussed herein, and which apparently have escaped the attention of many directors. Basic choral considerations if pursued with the necessary idealism, will certainly bring about new satisfactions and high levels of achievement for both the diligent student and those who are associated with him.

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ERRATA

PAGE 13 — Last paragraph should read —

"Now if the jaw and tongue are in a relaxed condition, it is obvious that the mental sensing of the vowel form becomes part and parcel of the same act. To produce the articulated vowels it will be found that the five pure vowels can be produced with hardly any movement of the lips. Then too, once a person has assumed the articulated position of one sensed vowel, it will be impossible to articulate the new vowel without first changing the previous concept."

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